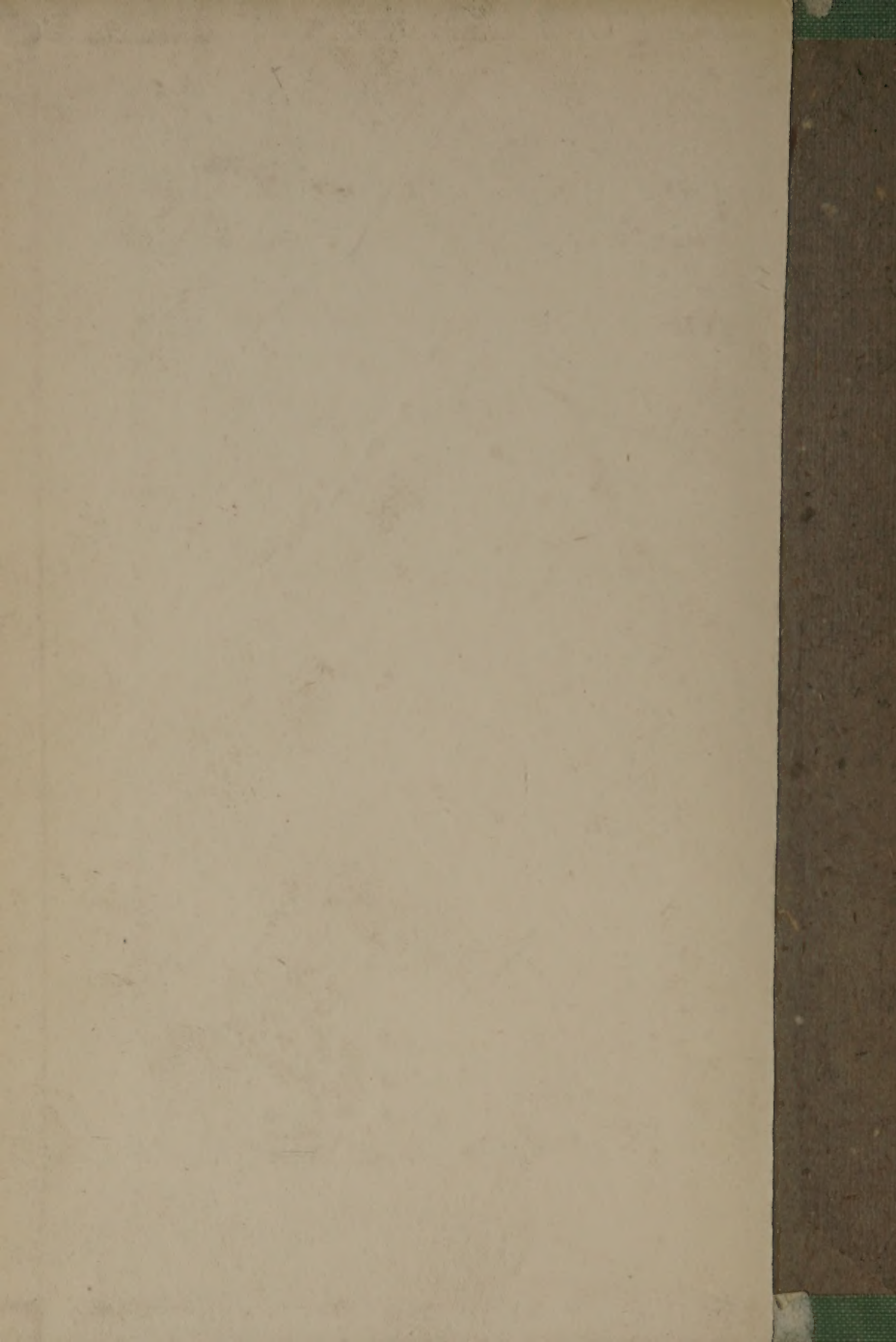


The House With The Silver Door

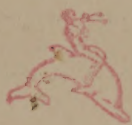


EVA·MARCH·TAPPAN



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By Eva March Tappan

THE HOUSE WITH THE SILVER DOOR.
WHEN KNIGHTS WERE BOLD.
DIXIE KITTEN.
AN OLD, OLD STORY-BOOK.
THE CHAUCER STORY BOOK.
LETTERS FROM COLONIAL CHILDREN.
AMERICAN HERO STORIES.
THE STORY OF THE ROMAN PEOPLE.
THE STORY OF THE GREEK PEOPLE.
THE GOLDEN GOOSE AND OTHER FAIRY
TALES.
THE CHRIST STORY.
OLD BALLADS IN PROSE.

All of the above are illustrated.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

THE HOUSE WITH THE
SILVER DOOR



(p. 30)

THE CHILDREN TOLD THE MOON LADY

THE HOUSE WITH THE SILVER DOOR

BY

EVA MARCH TAPPAN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

1913

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Published September 1913

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From drawings by Emily Hall Chamberlain.

THE HOUSE WITH THE
SILVER DOOR

THE HOUSE WITH THE SILVER DOOR

ONCE upon a time a man and his wife lived in a cottage in the forest, so far away that no one could think how far it was even if he tried for a month. They had two children, a boy and a girl. There was only one thing more that they wanted, and that was a silver door to the cottage.

“How I should like to have a silver door,” said the goodman, “so I could see the sun shine upon it at sunset when I came in from my work!”

“How I should like to have a silver door,” said the goodwife. “I should draw in the latchstring at night, and go to sleep thinking, ‘My door is made of silver, and how it will shine when the sun strikes it in the morning.’”

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The children had heard this every day since they could remember, and when they had grown older, they determined to go away and see if they could not find a silver door for their father and mother.

Very early one morning, long before their parents were awake, Silverboy and Silvergirl, for those were their names, took hold of each other's hand and went softly out of the cottage and far away. They climbed over fallen trees, they waded through brooks and mossy pools, they were caught in the briers, and they scrambled down break-neck cliffs. After a long time they came to the edge of the forest, but nowhere had they seen what they were looking for.

"What shall we do?" cried Silvergirl, sobbing. "I'm afraid we shall never find a silver door."

Silverboy might have cried, too, if he

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had been alone, but now he plucked up his courage and answered bravely:—

“Oh, we ’ll find it yet.”

“But we don’t even know where to look for it.”

“Do you see that great oak tree, the one with so many knots? I saw a squirrel run into a hole in the trunk just now. Maybe he’s the Wizard Squirrel himself, and I mean to ask him if he will tell us where to go.”

“Oh, don’t,” pleaded Silvergirl. “I am afraid he might hurt you.”

“Some wizards are bad,” declared Silverboy as wisely as if he had gone fishing with wizards every day of his life, “but some are good, and I’m almost sure that this is a good one.” Then he went under the tree and called softly:—

“Squirrel, squirrel, are you the Wizard Squirrel?”

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“Wizard yourself!” scolded the squirrel, making up a comical face at him. “I wish you ’d keep quiet; I want to eat my supper.”

“But won’t you please tell us where to look for a silver door?” begged Silverboy.

“In the place where they keep them, of course,” retorted the Wizard Squirrel, for it was really he himself.

“Won’t you please tell us where that is?” Silverboy persisted.

“Perhaps it is in the moon,” declared the Wizard Squirrel meditatively. “It looks as if there was a good deal of silver up there. Why don’t you ask the Moon King?” he added, dropping a bit of nutshell directly upon Silverboy’s nose. “Now, run away; you ask too many questions. Squirrels never ask questions at supper-time.”

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“But we can’t get to the moon,” said Silverboy sadly.

“No more can you get to me,” retorted the Wizard Squirrel, “but you won’t stop talking to me.” And with a whisk of his bushy tail he slipped out of sight into his hole.

“He means that we shall call to the moon,” said Silvergirl.

They went out from the forest to an open field to watch for the moon, and soon it shone down clear and bright, and they cried:—

“O moon, moon, won’t you please help us and tell us where to find a silver door?”

But the moon sailed on among the little clouds and answered never a word. Right behind the children, however, they heard a funny little chattering. It was the Wizard Squirrel, and he called:—

“You are real moon calves! I never told

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you to call out in that fashion. I've thought of something. What will you do for me if I tell you which way to go to find a silver door?"

"I'll give you a great pile of nuts," said Silverboy.

"Ho, nuts, indeed!" declared the Wizard Squirrel. "I can get nuts myself, and I can go to the very tops of trees that you would n't think of climbing."

"I'll do anything you say," promised Silverboy eagerly.

"There's just one thing that you can do for me," said the Wizard Squirrel. "I don't want the All-Alone Axe to cut down the Ancient Oak, and if you will go to the mountain over there and get him to promise to let it alone, you will be started on the right way to find the silver door. If he won't do it, you may as well go home, for you'll never find your door if you hunt

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till the skies fall. I can't stop to talk with moon calves any longer," and in a flash he was gone.

"Shall we do it?" asked Silvergirl; and her brother replied stoutly, "Yes, come on, and let us climb the mountain."

So on they went, across the meadow and over the swamp and through the thicket and up the side of the mountain. When they were halfway to the top, they heard the sound of chopping. Then they heard the fall of a tree.

"That must be the All-Alone Axe," said Silverboy. "It sounds as if it was over there, just behind the cliff. Come, and we will find the woodchopper and ask him not to cut down the Ancient Oak."

They hurried around the cliff, but no woodchopper was there. Nothing at all was to be seen but a great axe chopping away all by its lone self.

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“Please, Mr. All-Alone Axe,” said Silverboy, rather timidly, for he had never before seen an axe chopping away alone. “Please, Mr. All-Alone Axe, will you tell us where the woodchopper is?”

“Can’t you see?” demanded the All-Alone Axe sharply. “I’m chopping, and I’m chopping wood. What more woodchopper do you want?” And he cut away faster than ever.

The trees began to fall on the right and on the left, and Silvergirl was badly frightened. “Oh, if we only could get away!” she thought; but she called up all her courage and asked very politely:—

“Is there anything we can do for you, Mr. All-Alone Axe?”

“There’s a girl who knows an axe from a hatchet!” cried the All-Alone Axe; and he was so pleased that he actually stopped cutting for at least two minutes. “Yes,”

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he added; "over on that mountain the Gentle Giant lives, and after I have cut down some trees, he often comes and drags them away. If you'll make him promise to let my trees alone, I'll do whatever you want."

"Will you let the Ancient Oak stand?" asked Silvergirl.

"I will," replied the All-Alone Axe; so the children said good-bye and started for the mountain where the Gentle Giant lived.

It was a long, long way. They had to make a little raft before they could cross the river. They had to climb steep cliffs, to scramble down into deep gullies, and to creep over slippery rocks. At last they were well up the side of the Gentle Giant's mountain; and now they began to hear a loud rustling as if all the winds of the heavens were blowing all the branches of all the

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trees. They caught hold of each other's hand and stood listening. Pretty soon they heard, "Ho-ho! Ho-ho!" It sounded like some one taking a deep breath, but it was almost if not quite as loud as thunder. Silverboy and Silvergirl were so frightened that they would surely have run off down the mountain had not the Gentle Giant just then caught sight of them and roared out:—

"Ho, there! Stop, I say. I'm lonesome, I want to see you. Come here and talk to me."

It was not of the least use to try to run away, for he had stretched out two hands as big as pine trees, and in a moment he had Silverboy in his right hand and Silvergirl in his left hand and was holding them up before his eyes to get a better view of them.

"Who are you?" he roared as softly as

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he could, for he was not one of the hateful giants, but one of the good-natured sort.

“Where are you going?”

“We’re going to find a silver door for the cottage,” shouted Silverboy as loud as ever he could.

“Eh?” roared the Gentle Giant. “What’s that? Talk a little louder, can’t you?” And he held the children up to his ear.

Then Silvergirl screamed with all her might:—

“We’re going to find a silver door for the cottage.”

“That’s all right,” said the Gentle Giant, with a laugh that shook the trees like a tempest. “I wonder if *she’d* like a silver door,” he added, trying to look through the trees to another mountain even higher than his. “When you find your silver door, you might come up here and tell me about it,” he said with a chuckle. “If you are going

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up on *that* mountain, I'll carry you over the swamp and halfway up the hill. I don't dare to go any farther."

"Why, how could any one hurt *you*?" cried Silverboy, taking hold of the Gentle Giant's ear with both hands and shouting into it.

The Gentle Giant seemed so good-natured that the children did not feel one bit afraid; but now something happened that did frighten them, for the giant began to cry, and he cried such floods of tears that they had to cling to his fingers with all their might to keep from being washed off and down the side of the mountain.

"I'm sorry as I can be," said Silvergirl. "Don't cry, Mr. Gentle Giant." And Silverboy called, "We'll help you, and there shan't anybody hurt you."

The Gentle Giant laughed till he was almost crying again, and he shook so that

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the children had to hold on harder than ever. Then he said : —

“Come up on the mountain and see my house and eat dinner with me, will you? I’m lonesome up there, and it is n’t often that I get any children to come and play with me.”

Of course they said yes, and he carried them carefully up the mountain to the biggest house that they ever saw. It was built of logs, bigger than any trees that grew in their own forest. The door was so high that the clouds could have floated in as easy as anything. In one corner was the bed. To make it, the giant had driven into the floor a stake, or rather the trunk of a great pine tree. He had laid long rails from this stake to the two walls, shutting in the corner. On top of the rails were stout boughs, and on top of the boughs were whole barnfuls of soft spruce and fir and hemlock branches,

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until there was as comfortable a bed as was ever seen. For a table he had driven another tree trunk into the middle of the floor. Then he had split in two the biggest tree on the mountain and had fastened it to the top of the trunk, the flat side up. At one end of the room was the chimney, and that was large enough to roast at least ten oxen, eleven deer, and fifteen bears, with plenty of room between them for pigs and partridges.

“I don’t feel hungry to-day,” said the Gentle Giant, “so I put on only five oxen, four deer, and three bears to roast, with perhaps half a dozen little pigs; but now I have company, I ’ll hang up a few partridges, too, just for a relish.”

He hung a score or two of partridges in front of the fire, and when they were done, he called the children to sit down and eat with him, though at first it was rather hard

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to see how they could do it. He put them on two of his wooden stools, but, stretch their necks as they might, they could not see over the edge of the table.

“We’ll soon fix that,” declared the Gentle Giant.

He went to the end of the room, not more than a quarter of a mile away, and brought back his tallest churn. He set it on the stool bottomside up, and put Silver-girl on top of it.

“I have n’t any other churn that is tall enough for you,” said the giant, “but I’ll just bring in a pebble and put a cushion on it.”

So out of the door he went and soon came back with a stone in his hand big enough for a doorstep. He set that up on the stool and laid a cushion on top of it, and then they were ready for dinner.

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“Which will you have first,” he asked, “an ox or a bear?”

“Could I have a partridge?” asked Silvergirl.

“Just as many of them as you want,” replied the giant. “In my country we always ate the oxen and bears first; but you shall do as you like.”

So he gave each of the children some partridges, and then he himself began on the oxen. One by one they disappeared, and the pile of bones beside his plate grew higher and higher, till at last the children could not see his face at all. Through the bones, however, his great voice came rumbling as he called: “Are n’t you ready for your oxen yet, or will you have a deer or two and a few little pigs?”

He did not wait for an answer, but piled up oxen and bears and deer and pigs on the table before them.

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“Truly, Mr. Gentle Giant,” declared Silverboy, “we can’t eat any more. Could n’t you eat these?”

“Perhaps,” replied the giant, “though I don’t seem to have so much appetite as usual. I’ll take just a bite or two more and then we’ll all sit down under the trees and you can tell me where you are going and what you know about silver doors. I know a lady who—I mean I might want to find one myself some day.”

The Gentle Giant had already eaten the five oxen and the four deer, and now he ate the three bears and the little pigs. “Just one mouthful more to leave a good taste,” he said, and in two minutes the rest of the partridges were gone.

“Now come out of doors,” he called, and led the way to the great door, but the children did not follow him. “What’s the matter?” he asked.

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“We can’t get down,” they replied.

The Gentle Giant laughed until the stars would have rattled in the sky if it had been night. “I don’t have company of your size very often,” he said, “and I forget my manners.” Then he took Silvergirl in one great hand and Silverboy in the other and carried them out under the trees. “I’ll lie down on the moss,” he said, “and you can talk right into my ear. Tell me who you are and where you are going.”

So the Gentle Giant stretched himself out on the ground and Silverboy called into his ear:—

“We live in a cottage in our own forest, far as far away from here. Our father and our mother want a silver door, and we are going to find one for them.”

“How do you know where to look?” asked the Gentle Giant, rather drowsily, for he was getting sleepy.

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“We asked the Wizard Squirrel, and he told us to go to the All-Alone Axe. The All-Alone Axe told us to come here. We thought at first that the Wizard Squirrel meant us to call out to the Moon King, but he did n’t.”

“Eh!” shouted the Gentle Giant, starting up. “What’s that?”

“We thought he meant that we should call out to the Moon King, but he did n’t,” repeated Silverboy.

“Are you sure as sure that he did n’t say ‘the Moon Lady’?” demanded the Gentle Giant eagerly.

“No, he did n’t,” Silverboy answered, “but he said we must get the All-Alone Axe to promise not to cut down the Ancient Oak.”

“Did he promise?” the Gentle Giant asked.

“He said he would not touch the

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Ancient Oak if we could get you to promise not to drag away his trees after he has cut them down."

"But I have to," declared the Gentle Giant earnestly. "You see, I must build a big house to bring her to if she should ever marry me."

"It seems to me that your house is pretty big now," said Silvergirl.

But the Gentle Giant shook his great head.

"No," he said. "I wanted it as big as all outdoors, but it is n't more than half as big."

"When is she coming?" asked Silverboy.

"I don't know," replied the Gentle Giant sadly. "When I asked her to marry me, she only laughed; but maybe she'll change her mind some day, and I should be so ashamed if I had n't a house big enough for her."

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And the Gentle Giant dropped a tear as big as a waterpail. It fell upon Silvergirl and wet her from head to foot, but the Gentle Giant was so busy thinking that he did not notice the mischief he had done.

“I hope she’ll come,” declared Silver-boy warmly.

“So do I,” said Silvergirl.

The Gentle Giant sat for a long while gazing on a mountain that could just be seen through the trees. He seemed to be hard at work thinking. At last he turned to Silvergirl and asked:—

“So you really think this house is big enough, do you?”

“Indeed I do,” declared Silvergirl.

“I suppose you ought to know what a lady would like better than a great clumsy fellow like me,” the Gentle Giant mused. Then he said suddenly, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. If you will get the Moon Lady to

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say she 'll marry me, I 'll not drag away any more trees from the All-Alone Axe, and I 'll carry you both halfway up her mountain besides."

"We'll try our very best," said the children.

Then the Gentle Giant set Silverboy on his right shoulder and Silvergirl on his left, and away they went to the Moon Lady's mountain. When you ride on the shoulder of a giant who can take a quarter of a mile at a stride, even a long journey is soon done, and before they had any idea that they were halfway up the mountain, the Gentle Giant whispered as softly as he could : —

"Here you are, little folk. Just go up the mountain, and you'll be at her house in no time."

"Come with us," the children pleaded, for it seemed very lonesome to be left

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in the forest without the good-natured giant.

But he shook his head and whispered so gently that it was not much louder than a waterfall : —

“I don’t dare. She might look right at me and laugh and ask what I had come for, and then I should feel so ashamed. You go on, and if she only says she will marry me, tie a burning torch to the pine tree at the top of the mountain, and I’ll come and get you all and carry you wherever you wish.” And before the children could say another word, they heard his steps crashing down through the trees.

They went on and on toward the top of the mountain, and just as the sun was setting, they began to see something shining through the trees. It looked like glass and cream candy and rainbows, like brooks in the sunshine and quiet pools in the

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moonlight. It flashed and glowed and gleamed and sparkled. When they came nearer, they saw that it was a splendid palace, and looking out of one of the windows was the most beautiful lady that they had ever seen. She was laughing more musically than they had ever heard any one laugh before. The sound was like that made by little brooks rippling over stones, or little waves running up on the shore. When she caught sight of the children, she called : —

“Come in, you little dears. I’ll meet you at the door.”

She disappeared from the window, but they could hear her laughing happily as she tripped through the halls. In a minute she stood in the doorway, holding out her hands to them. She wore a silken gown almost as yellow as the sunshine. Her hair, too, was yellow and hung down to the ground in

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long ripples that gleamed and shimmered as the sunbeams touched them. On her head was a golden crescent, and above it was just one golden star. The children stood gazing at her, for in all their lives they had never seen any one half so lovely.

“Well, what is it?” she called lightly. “Am I so ugly? You stand there gazing at me as if I were a monster.”

“I did not know anybody could be so beautiful,” cried Silverboy honestly. Silvergirl slipped up beside her, and the Moon Lady took her little brown hand in her own and began to laugh from pure pleasure and merriment.

“Come in,” she cried, “come in. I’ve been waiting for you. I knew you were coming. It’s hard to keep secrets from the Moon Lady. Secrets are such nice things to laugh at, don’t you think so?” she called to Silverboy; and in a minute she

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had his hand, too, and was leading both the children into the palace and up the broad marble stairs. "Now," she said, "I have one room full of candy, and another full of toys, and another full of brooks to sail boats in, and another full of ponies for children to ride, and another full of pretty gardens to play in, and —"

"But how can there be gardens and brooks in a room in a house?" asked Silvergirl, gazing at her with great wondering eyes.

The Moon Lady looked amused. "Because this is a Wonder Palace," she said at last. "Don't you know that in a Wonder Palace one can have whatever she likes? You like gardens to play in, I am sure of that, and so there are gardens in one of my rooms. You like ponies, and so there are ponies here. I don't see anything strange about it," and she laughed so merrily that

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the children could not help laughing with her. They went to the candy room and the toy room and the brook room and the pony room and the others. These were all so delightful that when the Moon Lady asked which they liked best, they could not choose.

“That is no matter,” she declared, “for you must stay here with me forever and always, and there will be new rooms for you every day, and each one will be full of finer things than you ever saw before.”

“Oh!” cried the children, “but we must not. We must go on and find a silver door for the father and the mother.”

“What’s that about a silver door?” asked the Moon Lady. “A wizard told me something about a silver door once, but I don’t know what he meant. He said:—

When the silver door flies open,
Then the iron door shuts tight.

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Silver cheats you in the moonbeams,
Iron is honest in the light."

"Was the wizard a squirrel, dear Moon Lady?" the children asked.

"I forget," she replied, "it was so long ago; but it was a good thing to laugh at," and again she laughed so lightly and musically that the children fancied they heard a summer shower falling upon the leaves. "Have you seen a wizard, too?" she asked; "and has he told you about a silver door? Come into the room that is full of all the music of all the world and tell me about it."

So they went into the room, and while all the music of all the world was playing softly around them, the children told the Moon Lady about their little home in the far-away forest. They told her how much the father and the mother wanted a silver door, and how they had come out into the

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world to try to find one. They told her about the Wizard Squirrel who would help them if the All-Alone Axe would agree to spare the Ancient Oak; about the All-Alone Axe who would spare the Ancient Oak if the Gentle Giant would stop dragging away his trees; and then about the Gentle Giant who would stop dragging away the trees if only —

“What next?” the Moon Lady interrupted; “the Gentle Giant would stop dragging away the trees if what?”

“If you would only marry him,” said Silverboy boldly. “Won’t you please marry him, for we do want to find a silver door so very, very much?”

“What kind of giant is he?” the Moon Lady asked, trying to look very serious.

“He’s the best giant in all the world, I just know he is,” declared Silverboy; and Silvergirl added, “He was so good to us.

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I'm sure you would love him. He said you told him you would n't marry him, but you will, won't you?"

"Certainly," replied the Moon Lady, "I'd just as soon as not. I meant to all the time, but I wanted to see whether he would come back and ask me again."

"Then I'll go to the very top of the mountain and tie a lighted torch to the topmost bough of the tall pine tree, so he will know that you are willing to marry him," cried Silverboy, and in a moment he would have been away had not the Moon Lady stopped him.

"If the Gentle Giant wants me very much, he will come and get me," she said.

"But he's afraid," cried Silvergirl; "he said he was."

"Then he can't have me," declared the Moon Lady.

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“Then we can’t get the silver door,” said Silverboy soberly.

“Why not?” asked the Moon Lady lightly. “Wandering about the world to find silver doors is not the thing for a girl, of course, but you can do it if you like. Silvergirl must stay here with me, but you may go out and search. There’s nothing to hinder your going straight up to the moon and choosing one for yourself. I’ve been there many a time. My brother is the King of the Moon.”

“But how can I get there?” cried Silverboy. “Can I go to the top of a high, high mountain and leap upon the moon when it passes by?”

“If that is n’t just like a boy!” cried the Moon Lady, with another of her merry laughs. “Silvergirl would n’t try to get there in any such foolish way, I know. Would you, Silvergirl?”

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“I believe I should try to go to the top of the tallest tree in the world,” replied Silvergirl, “and then, when the moonbeams touched it, I would beg them to carry me home with them.”

“That’s much more sensible,” said the Moon Lady gravely; and she added with a little twinkle in her bright eyes, “If there was n’t any other way, yours would be the best, but there’s one way that is better.”

“What is it?” cried the children together.

“You must go to the Slippery Spider and ask him for web enough to build a ladder,” she replied; “that is, you may go, Silverboy; and when you come back, we’ll talk about All-Alone Axes and Wizard Squirrels, and maybe about Gentle Giants. There’s one thing you must remember; so long as you are on the face of the earth

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you are safe, but if you go into the earth you will never come here again. Will you promise not to go into the earth?"

Silverboy promised. Then he said good-bye and set out in search of the Slippery Spider. He went down the mountain and over the fields, asking every bird and every bee that he met if they knew where to find the Slippery Spider, but not one of them could tell him. At length he asked a little fly that was sitting on a green leaf in the sunshine.

"Yes, I know," said the fly, "but it makes me flutter to think of him."

"How do you find his home?" asked Silverboy.

"You have to go into the Valley of Twilight, past nine gray rocks and three dead trees. By and by, you come to a great mass of briars, and under the briars is where the Slippery Spider lives; but don't go there.

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He is — ” But Silverboy was already on his way to the Valley of Twilight. He went past the nine gray rocks and the three dead trees and came to the great mass of briars ; but no Slippery Spider was to be seen.

“ Slippery Spider, O Slippery Spider,” he called, “ won’t you please give me a little web to make a ladder to go to the moon ? ”

He heard a rustling in the leaves, and in a moment there stood beside him the queerest, most dried-up little old man that he had ever seen. The little old man made a bow and in a thin, squeaky voice he replied : —

“ Certainly, my good sir. I shall be glad to give you web enough to go to the moon or seven times as far, if you wish. Will you kindly walk into my underground house. It is cool and comfortable there, and we will talk this matter over together.”

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Silverboy was about to follow the Slippery Spider when he remembered what the Moon Lady said, that he must not go into the earth, and he asked:—

“Could n’t we sit down here and talk about it?” He fancied that the Slippery Spider’s eyes flashed red for a moment, but the little old man said quietly:—

“I see. Some one has been telling you stories about my home. If you prefer, we will sit down under these beautiful brier bushes. Here is my favorite lane, between the Tumbling Rock and the Withering Grass. Will you come?”

“I’m too big. I can’t get in there,” replied Silverboy.

“Oh, we can manage all that,” said the Slippery Spider, in an offhand way. “Just step in and there will be no trouble.”

Silverboy thought he heard the buzzing of a fly, but he said to himself, “Surely,

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there's no harm in just stepping toward the briers," and he said to the Slippery Spider: —

“Certainly I will if you wish.”

He took one step into the narrow passageway; and he was surprised enough to find that he could walk in it without the least difficulty. “I wonder how he has done that,” he thought. “Somehow he has made the grass as tall as I am, and the brier bushes are as big as any tree in the forest. I wonder what strange thing that is away up above my head. It looks like a mushroom, but it is as high as the roof of a house.” Suddenly it burst upon him that this really was a mushroom and that, instead of making the passage big, the Slippery Spider had made him so little that when the dreadful creature caught hold of him and dragged him down into a cavern, he could not do anything to save himself.

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The cavern was dark as dark, but after his eyes were a little used to the darkness, he could see that a strong spider-web had been drawn across the opening. He felt in his tiny pocket for his tiny knife and began to cut away at the stout cords of the web; but he could not make even the smallest break.

“That ’s right,” called the thin, squeaky voice, “you are a good jailer; I shan’t have to watch you.”

Silverboy looked up, and there was the Slippery Spider peering through the web, twice as tall as his prisoner. It did not seem quite so dark as at first, and Silverboy could see what an ugly grin was on his face.

“I suppose you don’t know,” said the Slippery Spider, with a hateful chuckle, “that this is a magic web, and that every time you cut a thread, you make it exactly

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seven times as strong as it was before. Oh, you 're a good jailer, you are!" and again he laughed, the most sneering, malicious laugh that can be imagined. At last he went away, leaving Silverboy in the darkness. He came back once more for a moment and called : —

"I say, you 're not fat enough yet. When you get fatter, I shall eat you. You won't have long to wait."

Poor Silverboy, there he sat and wondered if there was any way to escape. He thought of his father and mother and sister. "I shall never, never see them again," he sobbed; and he threw himself on the cold floor of the cave and cried and cried.

Suddenly he felt a little hand wiping away his tears with the softest and daintiest of handkerchiefs. The hand was so smooth and gentle that at first he pretended not to know that it was there for

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fear it would go away. Then a sweet little voice said softly:—

“Boy, poor boy, don’t cry.”

“Who are you?” asked Silverboy. “How did you come here? Did the Slippery Spider bring you, too?”

“I was walking alone,” said the sweet voice, “and I saw the lane. It looked pretty, for the briars were in bloom, and I started to come into it; but before I knew it, I was in this dreadful den.”

“And did he make you small as he made me?” asked Silverboy.

“Oh, no, I am just as tall as ever.”

“Let’s stand up back to back,” said Silverboy, “and I will put my hand on my head and then on yours, for I don’t see how any one could get in here and not be made little.” So they stood up back to back, and Silverboy put his hand on his own head and then on hers, and he found,

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as he had expected, that she was no taller than he. Indeed, she was not quite so tall.

“But what is this on your head?” he asked. “It feels pointed and queer. What is it?”

“That’s my pearl coronet,” the little girl replied. “I wear it because my father is a king. They call me the Pearl Princess. What is your name?”

“I am Silverboy. I wish it was light so I could see your face.”

“So do I,” said the Pearl Princess; “I mean, so I could see yours. Don’t you suppose we can ever, ever get out of this horrible place?”

“We’ll find a way somehow,” declared Silverboy; for now that he was not alone, he felt much more courageous and hopeful. He pulled and tugged at the bars with all his might and main; but, try his best, he could not stir them one bit. Indeed, they only grew

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stronger and firmer whenever he touched them; and even after a long, long time had passed away, Silverboy and the Pearl Princess were still prisoners in the den of the Slippery Spider.

All this while Silvergirl was living in the Wonder Palace with the Moon Lady. As time passed, she was no more a child, but a tall young girl who grew prettier every day until she had become the fairest little maiden in all the land. She would have been the happiest if her brother had only come back; but the brother did not come, and she began to grow sad and pale. The Moon Lady sent her servants to scour the country roundabout. They peered into the valleys, they looked through and through every little corner of the forest; they asked all the brook fairies and all the flower fairies and all the grass fairies, but none of them had seen anything of Silver-

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boy. Every night when they came in from their search, Silvergirl asked, "Have you found my brother?" When they answered, "No, but perhaps we shall find him tomorrow," she looked sadder than ever.

The Moon Lady was very much troubled.

"Oh, I wish the Moon King would come!" she often said. "He would know what to do to help us."

One night, just as it was growing dark, the Moon Lady and Silvergirl saw a bright light shining in the east. It grew larger and brighter and came nearer every minute. The palace glowed and gleamed with the reflection as if there were blazing torches in every corner of it.

"That's my brother," cried the Moon Lady joyfully. "He is the Moon King, and he will know how to help us find Silverboy."

By and by the Moon King came driving

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straight up the side of the mountain with his six shining white horses. The Moon Lady threw her arms about his neck and kissed him. Then she made a great feast for him. On the table were the most delicious things of all the countries. The air was full of all the music of all the world, and it was a very happy time.

But after a little while the Moon King did not even look at the dainties or listen to the music. He looked at pretty Silver-girl and he listened to nothing but her voice.

"I saw your face in a dream last night," he said, "and I want you for my Moon Queen. Will you marry me?"

"But my brother has not come back," she answered, "and I have n't yet found the silver door for my father and mother."

"I'll give you silver doors for all the cottages in the forest," cried the Moon

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King, "and I'll find your brother if he is aboveground."

"But the Moon Lady's servants have looked everywhere aboveground," said Silvergirl sadly, "and they could not find him."

"Then I'll look underground," declared the Moon King. "I know all the gnomes and dwarfs and pixies and underworld fairies and crickets and field mice; and there is n't one of them that would n't be gladder than glad to do me a favor. Will you marry me when I have found Silverboy?"

Even the little bird at the window could not hear her answer; but it seemed to please the Moon King, for he cried joyfully to his sister, "Take good care of my bride, and I'll be here with Silverboy in the twinkling of a star." And before she could say good-bye, his white horses with their

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golden harness were tearing down the mountain as if they were trying to catch up with the swiftest river that ever flowed.

Finding Silverboy was not quite so easy as the Moon King had expected, for no one but the Slippery Spider knew that he had become so tiny. The gnomes and the dwarfs and the pixies and the underworld fairies and all the rest looked in vain for a tall boy in search of a silver door. The crickets and the field mice looked, but Silverboy was nowhere to be found. Silvergirl grew paler and paler, and the Moon Lady began to feel anxious, not only lest some wild beast or some fierce bird of prey should have devoured Silverboy, but also lest Silvergirl should grieve herself to death for the loss of her brother.

All the little folk of the forest and field, those that wore feathers or furs or hair or just plain skin, were talking about the lost

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Silverboy, and at last the news came to the Thoughtful Snail. No one had dreamed of his joining in the search because he was so slow and had to carry his house about with him; but the Thoughtful Snail went to his neighbor, the Friendly Glowworm, and said:—

“I’ve been thinking.”

“Well?” said the Friendly Glowworm.

“I’ve been thinking.”

“Well?”

“I’ve been thinking,” declared the Thoughtful Snail for the third time, and then he told what he thought. “The Moon King has been good to me,” he said slowly, “and I’ve been thinking that I should like to find the brother of his bride.”

“Is that all?” exclaimed the Friendly Glowworm. “We’d every one of us like to find him.”

“But I’ve been thinking,” said the

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Thoughtful Snail again, and then he stopped to think a little more. The Friendly Glowworm waited patiently, and at last the Thoughtful Snail continued:—

“If they can’t find a tall young man aboveground, then there isn’t any tall young man, and he must be short.”

“Is that all?” exclaimed the Friendly Glowworm again.

“No,” replied the Thoughtful Snail slowly. “I’ve thought of something else. All the real wizards are good friends of the Moon King, and there’s only one of the creatures of the forest that can change the shape of a man.”

“You mean the Slippery Spider?” asked his friend.

“Yes,” replied the Thoughtful Snail; “and I’ve been thinking that if the Slippery Spider has changed his shape, he has made him smaller than himself, of course,

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or else he would have got away long before this."

"That's so," exclaimed the Friendly Glowworm, beginning to be interested.

"I think he is smaller than a spider and that the Slippery Spider has fastened him into some den. You know that he can spin a magic web. It can be cut from the outside, but if any one tries to cut it from the inside, it grows stronger."

"Then you think —"

"I've been thinking," the Thoughtful Snail interrupted; "and I think that if you will go with me to carry the torch, we will go to the Slippery Spider's hole to-night when he is away watching his nets, and perhaps we shall find Silver-boy."

That night the Thoughtful Snail and the Friendly Glowworm made their way to the lane of the Slippery Spider. The Friendly

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Glowworm crept under a dry leaf, and the Thoughtful Snail crouched in front of him so that the keen eyes of the Slippery Spider should see no ray of light. They watched him come out of his little lane and go away to look at his nets to see if some unwary traveler had not been caught in them; then they crept boldly in toward the den in the rock. The lane was so rough that more than once the Friendly Glowworm was tumbled from one side to the other, and so briery that the delicate horns of the Thoughtful Snail were scratched and torn; but on they went until at last they were in front of the Slippery Spider's den. Behold, there was the magic web stretched across the opening, and thicker and stronger than was ever the web of a spider before.

The Friendly Glowworm was so excited that he quivered like a jelly; and as for the Thoughtful Snail, his shell fairly rattled

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against the rock. It made such a noise that Silverboy called : —

“Who ’s there ?”

“Who ’s *there* ?” cried the Thoughtful Snail gladly. “Are you Silverboy ?”

“Yes, who are you ?”

For answer the Thoughtful Snail pushed his whole weight against the web, while the Friendly Glowworm caught hold of it and pulled and tugged with all his might. It fell on the ground, and Silverboy stepped out, pale as pale, and so small that his new friends could hardly see him ; but it was the real Silverboy himself.

“Come quick,” said they, “before the Slippery Spider comes home.”

“But I must go back for the Pearl Princess,” he declared. And although the Thoughtful Snail grumbled that he had not come to get any sort of princess, Silverboy would not think of going without her.



EMERY BALL
CHAMBERLIN

SILVERBOY CALLED, "WHO'S THERE?"

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He took her by the hand and led her out; and when the Thoughtful Snail and the Friendly Glowworm saw how beautiful she was, they were glad, indeed, that she had not been left in the den to be devoured by the Slippery Spider.

Down the little lane they all went, and at every step Silverboy and the Pearl Princess grew larger, until when they were near the opening, they had to crouch and creep to get through it at all. Silverboy was so glad to find himself growing taller again that he did not care a straw for that, and he only laughed when the briers tore his hands and his face as he tried his best to keep their sharp points from the Pearl Princess.

At last they were out of the lane, and the Thoughtful Snail cried : —

“Come, Silverboy, come. Don’t wait. The Slippery Spider may be here at any mo-

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ment"; for he had forgotten that Silverboy was large enough now to kill a hundred Slippery Spiders.

But Silverboy stood gazing into the face of the Pearl Princess as if he was bewitched.

"I never, never saw any one so beautiful," he cried. "Dear Pearl Princess, I'm a man now. Won't you marry me?"

"Yes," replied the Pearl Princess, "I will; that is," she added, "I will, if you will promise never to tell any one that once I was smaller than a spider."

Silverboy was now a tall young man. He led the Pearl Princess with one hand and carried the Thoughtful Snail and the Friendly Glowworm in the other, and they all went across fields and meadows and brooks, through forests and forests, and up the highest of all mountains to the Wonder Palace of the Moon Lady.

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Then there was rejoicing that *was* rejoicing from the very bottom of the palace to the top. The candy room threw its door open and begged to be eaten. The toys set to playing all of their own accord. The brooks ran faster than brooks ever ran before and made prettier little dimples and ripples than any other brooks ever made. The ponies began to trot and prance and canter. The gardens became more beautiful than any one ever dreamed that even a garden could be. The Moon King and Silvergirl were married, and Silverboy and the Pearl Princess were married, and the Thoughtful Snail and the Friendly Glow-worm danced at the weddings.

The air was full of all the music that ever was in all the world; but from another mountain a sound came across the valley, and up, up, to the Wonder Palace, that was not music, but a most mournful sighing.

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When the Moon Lady heard it, her face grew pink, and she turned away and looked out of the window on the farther side of the palace.

“Heigh, there!” cried the Moon King. “Who is that sighing on the night of my wedding? Find him and give him whatever he wants. Do you know him, sister? What does he want?”

“I think it must be that he wants me,” replied the Moon Lady demurely.

“That ’s — that ’s — why, that ’s —” stammered the Moon King, and stood staring straight at his sister, too much surprised to say another word.

“It’s the Gentle Giant over on the other mountain,” Silverboy explained. “He said he would not drag away the trees of the All-Alone Axe if the Moon Lady would marry him.”

“And so, my Moon Lady sister, you’re

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going to marry the Gentle Giant to save the trees of the All-Alone Axe, are you?" exclaimed the Moon King in amazement.

"I think perhaps I will," replied the Moon Lady, with one of her little rippling laughs. "I don't see any other way to keep him from sighing, and you don't like to hear sighing."

"Well, I never thought of such a thing!" declared the Moon King.

And the Moon Lady retorted gayly, "I did, then. I've thought of it as many times as three, and I'm going to do it. He's the best giant in all the world, and I'm going to marry him whenever he —"

Just then there was a commotion outside, as if some one was crashing through the forest in a great hurry. There was a tramping and a stamping, and the face of the Gentle Giant appeared at the door, all ashine with pleasure.

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"I heard you, I heard you," he cried. "I heard you down the mountain, and I've come to get you. We'll be married this very night, we will." And the Gentle Giant clapped his hands and danced and sang and laughed out of pure happiness.

So there was another wedding in the palace, and then they all set off to carry the Moon Lady to the home of the Gentle Giant. The Thoughtful Snail and the Friendly Glowworm went, too, for Silver-boy carried one, and the Pearl Princess carried the other. The Friendly Glowworm shone so bright that no one noticed a strange thing that was happening. Something else had joined the wedding procession. It was the Wonder Palace itself. After a little while it disappeared. It went up the mountain a shorter way, and when they came to the great door of the house of the Gentle Giant and looked in, behold,

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it was all aglow with light; and no wonder, for there were sunbeams and rainbows and dewdrop sparkles and waterfall gleams and fireplace sparks and Northern light glimmerings, all in one brilliant and glorious tangle. In the midst of it and round about it was all the music of all the world, for the whole Wonder Palace had slipped in through the farther door.

“The Thoughtful Snail and I have brought our houses with us,” said the bride as quietly as if she always traveled with a palace for a companion. “But, truly,” she whispered to the Gentle Giant, “I did not know it was coming.”

“Everything bright and beautiful is where you are,” he whispered back.

So it was that the Gentle Giant won his beautiful bride; that the trees of the All-Alone Axe were never again dragged away; and that the Wizard Squirrel was never

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driven from his home in the Ancient Oak.

But all this time the father and the mother were in their cottage far away in the depths of the forest. At twilight the two often sat in the doorway and talked about their children.

“They will come home some day,” declared the mother bravely.

“We shall never see them again,” said the father.

One night as they were saying this, they heard from far away a tramping of many horses. Up the forest road they came, their hoofs beating softly on the mossy ground. When they were in full sight, the father and the mother saw, first, a long line of knights in red armor, riding on milk-white horses; then a line of knights in blue armor, riding on horses black as the darkness itself. So they came. There were knights in green and

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knights in yellow; and last of all, there were three chariots abreast and an empty one behind them. The chariot on the left was made of steel that flashed in the light of the torches. In it sat a handsome young man. Beside him was his princess, and she was all aglow with softly gleaming pearls. On the right was an immense chariot of silver, and in this was a giant with so gentle a face that no one could ever be afraid of him, even though he was so large. He, too, had a bride sitting beside him. She had strings and strings of opals about her throat. Over them and over her face played a soft clear light that was almost like the moonbeams on the water. Between these two chariots was a third. It was all ablaze with diamonds, and in it sat one that every one who looked upon him would have known to be a king. The shadows were growing deeper, but a brilliant light that did not

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come from the torches was all about him and his beautiful bride. Whenever they spoke or looked at each other, the light flashed joyfully and made all around them as bright as day.

The father and the mother sat in the door, saying never a word, but looking and looking and looking. The wonderful procession swept past their humble little cottage, until the three chariots were in front of the door. Then they stopped. The father and the mother rose quickly and bowed themselves before the king.

“It is ordered that you shall no longer dwell in this cottage,” he said gravely.

At first the father and the mother were too grieved and alarmed to speak, but finally the mother plucked up courage to plead:—

“O king, if you will only let us stay here till the children come home! We will

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do never a bit of harm. We won't even pick up the dead sticks for firewood, or the dry grass to make our bed. If we go away, the children will not know where to find us, and we shall never see them again. Please, please let us stay till we have seen them just once more."

The king shook his head sternly and said:—

"You are to live here no longer."

Then the father hid his face in his hands and the mother threw her apron over her head; but in a moment the young man had sprung down from the chariot of steel and was crying, "Father, father, don't you know your own boy?" And the beautiful young woman who had been in the chariot that was all a-glitter with diamonds had pulled the apron away from the face of the mother and was crying, "Mother, mother, have you forgotten your own daughter?"

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The Moon King sent away the knights, and then he and Silvergirl, the Pearl Princess and Silverboy, and the Moon Lady and the Gentle Giant sat down together on the soft grass just outside the cottage. Such stories as they had to tell of the search for the silver door! They told about the Wizard Squirrel, the All-Alone Axe, the Wonder Palace, the Slippery Spider, and no one can say how many other folk. They talked and talked and talked; and while they were talking, they heard a funny little chattering over their heads. They all looked up, and there on the bough of a pine tree sat the Wizard Squirrel and the All-Alone Axe, hobnobbing in the most sociable way, while the Friendly Glowworm and the Thoughtful Snail, who had come, of course, with the rest of the company and were now sitting on the moss at the foot of the tree, were staring at them with all their eyes, for they had

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never before seen an axe and a squirrel dancing together on a branch.

For three days and three nights the happy people talked of the wonderful things that had happened. Then Silvergirl said:—

“But, father and mother, you haven’t asked for the silver door.”

“Little we care for silver doors,” they cried, “now that we have our children back again.”

“But we have one for you. It is in the country of the Moon King; and when you go through the silver door, you come into a golden palace. Will you come with us and stay all your lives long?”

“Yes, we will come,” said the father and the mother, and they stepped joyfully into the golden chariot that had been empty before.

Then the knights came back and lifted

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their plumed hats and bowed before the father and the mother. They all rode away and away and away from the gloomy forest to the happy country of the Moon King; and when a messenger last came from that country, they were all living together in the greatest peace and happiness in the beautiful golden palace with the silver door.

KING HANSEL THE FIRST

KING HANSEL THE FIRST

THERE was once a boy named Hansel who had lost his father, mother, and sister. Some people thought that they had been stolen by trolls, but no one knew certainly. Everybody's house was full, and there was no room for the lonely little boy. "There is nothing for you to do but to go out into the world and seek your fortune," people said to him; so Hansel put on his little cap and started out.

He walked along the highway until he came to a place where four roads met. The first went through a forest; the second went down a steep hill; the third led over a sunny plain; and the fourth wound up a bleak, rocky mountainside. "When one has nowhere to go, one road is as good as another," said Hansel to himself, and he

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looked at each in turn. The sun was warm and the forest looked cool and shady, so he decided to go through the forest.

The road was soft and mossy. There were many flowers along the way. Every little while there were open glades that were red with sweet wild strawberries. He often stopped to pick them, and as he went along, he said to himself, "It isn't so bad a thing, after all, to have to seek one's fortune — if I only had a father and mother to go back to after I have found it. Such a pleasant road as this must lead to some beautiful place. Maybe I shall come to a palace. It will be made of gold, of course, and the windows will sparkle like diamonds. I will go around to the smallest back door and ask, 'Do you want a boy to herd the sheep or the cattle?' The king's man will answer, 'Yes, we do. Come in and we will pay you a silver penny every month.'

King Hansel the First

I can grow up fast, and some day, when the king's daughter is crossing the river, she will fall in and I —”

These thoughts were broken in upon by a pitiful noise of a sort that the boy had never heard before. It sounded a little like the crowing of a cock, but it was hoarse and half-stifled. “Some creature is in trouble,” said Hans to himself. “I’ll hurry on and see what it is.” He ran down the road, and every minute the crying sounded louder and more distressed. At last he came to a tiny clearing where a little hut was standing. The door was closed and the owner had evidently gone from home. Not far from the house was a coop, and in the coop was one lone cock.

“Please give me some water,” he begged; “I am dying of thirst.”

“Where shall I find it?” Hansel asked.

“Indeed, I don’t know,” the cock gasped.

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“The brook said it was tired of having creatures drink it. ‘I don’t drink them,’ it said, ‘and why should I let them drink me?’ and then it ran off downhill as fast as it could go. But do find me some water. I am choking.”

Hansel began to search for water, but not a pool or a pond or a river or a brook or a spring or a swamp could be found. There was not even a drop of dew to carry to the suffering cock, for the sun was warm and even the dew had vanished. Then Hansel went back and said: —

“I have searched the country through, and not a drop of water can I find.”

“Then I shall die,” the cock groaned.

“No, you won’t,” said the boy cheerily, “for I’m going to dig a well for you.”

Hansel looked all around the little place and at last he found a spade. Then he pulled off his jacket and began to dig. The

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sun grew hotter and hotter, but still he kept at it.

“Have you found water yet?” cried the cock, after a little while.

“Not yet,” answered Hansel, “but the farther I dig, the nearer I am to it,” and he dug faster than ever.

“Have you found it yet?” asked the cock again, a little later.

“The earth is moist,” Hansel answered; but he was now so deep down in the hole that his voice could hardly be heard.

“Have you found it yet?” the cock gasped faintly, after a few minutes. “I can’t stand up any longer. I think I am dying.”

Hansel was now so deep down that he could not hear the cock’s question; but he gave it a good answer, nevertheless, for he climbed out of the well as fast as ever he could. The water was coming in

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by pailfuls, and he carried his cap all full and dripping to the thirsty cock.

It was not long before the cock was as well as ever. Hansel made a little trench from the well to the coop so that the poor thing should not suffer from thirst again. Then he said : —

“Good-bye, Friend Cock. I must go on my way now, for I am seeking my fortune.”

“But I have n’t thanked you yet,” said the cock. “How shall I pay you for what you have done for me?”

“Oh, I don’t want any pay,” called Hansel over his shoulder, for he was already on his way.

“But I have a gift for you,” cried the cock, and Hansel went back. The cock stretched his neck through the bars of the coop. Something was in his bill.

“This is for you,” he said, and he

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dropped a little black seed into the boy's hand. "When you are in trouble, plant that seed."

"Thank you very much," said Hansel. "I'll keep it to remember you by," and he dropped it into his pocket. "Good-bye again," he called.

"Oh, but wait a minute," pleaded the cock. "I have some advice for you."

"All right," replied the boy good-naturedly. "What is it? Advice is n't heavy, and I can carry it in the same pocket with the seed."

"The first time that a giant asks you a question, be sure to answer 'Yes.'"

"I hope I'll not meet any giants, but if I do, I'll not forget," Hansel promised. "All good things are three, so good-bye again."

"Then gifts should be three," declared the cock, "and the third is yet to come."

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This is a bit of advice, too. There's no good fortune down this road. Whoever walks beyond this house comes to trouble. Turn back and choose another way."

Hansel hesitated, for he remembered how hot and sandy or rocky the other roads looked; but he remembered, too, what his old nurse used to say, "There's many and many a thing that the beasts and birds know which men and women have yet to learn."

"I'll go back," he said; "and now good-bye for the last time."

"Good-bye," called the cock, with a cheery crow. "Don't lose the seed and don't forget to say 'Yes' to the first question that a giant asks you."

Then Hansel went back through the forest, and it was not long before he came to the place where the four roads met. "One is as good as another," he said to

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himself again, "and I may as well take the second."

At first it was not an easy road, for it went down a steep hill covered with round stones. The boy had to pick his way among them as gingerly as if they had been eggs. But when he was once at the foot of the hill, it became a very pleasant road, for it went along beside the shore of a pretty lake. The tiny waves rippled up against the yellow sand as if they thought the little lake was a real ocean and themselves real breakers. Pearly shells lay on the shore. Hansel picked up a handful and walked along tossing them up in the air and catching them. Then he began to talk to himself. He said:—

"Nurse used to tell me about the King of the Water World. He lives in a cave far down in the ocean. He wears a crown of pearls and he sits on a throne. The sun

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never shines there, but the walls of the cave are covered with rubies and emeralds, and they sparkle so that it is as light as day. When I come near his palace, I will ask if he has any work that a boy can do. He will say, 'Yes, one of my mermaids has been stolen away from me, and I will give you half of my kingdom if you will bring her back.' Then I will go far and far and farther than far. I will go through groves of coral, over beds of green and blue and yellow sea-mosses. I shall see shells of crimson and silver and gold; but I won't stop for one of them. I'll go on and on and on till I come to the den of the sea-monster that stole the mermaid. There'll be a little hole in her dungeon, and she will stretch out her white hand and beckon me. I'll kill the dragon and —"

"Meow, meow!" came to his ears; "help me, help me!"

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"I know what that is, anyhow," said the boy to himself; and he called, "Pussy, pussy, what's the matter? I'm coming to help you. But where are you?" he cried, for no cat was in sight.

"Meow, meow!" wailed the cat, and Hansel began to search for her. Far out in the lake was a tiny green island, and the cries seemed to come from that, though nothing was to be seen on it but a sandy beach, a rock, and a tall tree. Hansel waded out into the lake, but the water grew deep so fast that he had to go back to the shore. Still the pitiful cries continued. The boy threw off his clothes and swam out to the island. Behind the rock lay a heavy bag, tied with seven knots; and it was from the bag that the cries were coming.

"Hold on, pussy, I'll get you out," he said, and he set to work to untie the seven knots. Each one was more difficult than

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the ones before it, but at last the seventh had been untied, and a poor, forlorn, yellow-and-black cat crept out. Hansel stroked her wet fur and rubbed it dry with some bits of dead grass. The cat purred and arched her back and rubbed her head against his hand.

“How did you happen to be in that bag?” he asked.

“Some one gave my master a pretty gray cat,” she replied. “He said he did not want two, and so he tied me up in the bag and threw me into the lake.”

“I’m glad I came along in time to get you out,” said Hansel heartily. “If you will sit on my shoulder, I will swim ashore and carry you.”

The cat sprang eagerly to his shoulder, and he started to swim ashore. At first she was as light as a feather, but before they had gone far from the island, she began to

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grow heavy. She grew heavier and heavier, but the boy would not throw her off to drown. He struggled on and came at last to the shore, but he was so tired that he could hardly stand. As he lay on the shore resting, the cat scrambled about among the bushes, and seemed to be searching for something.

After a little, the boy cried: —

“Good-bye, pussy, good-bye. When a boy is seeking his fortune, he must seek it,” and he started to go on farther.

“But I have n’t thanked you yet,” cried the cat, running out of the bushes. “What shall I give you for what you have done for me?”

“Oh, I don’t want any reward,” cried Hansel. “I’m glad I got you out.”

“But I have a gift for you,” called the cat, and Hansel went back. The cat dropped a tiny white seed into his hand.

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“When you are in trouble, plant that,” she said.

“Thank you, thank you,” said Hansel. “I’ll keep it to remember you by,” and he put it into his pocket to lie beside the little black seed. “Good-bye again,” he cried.

“Ah, but wait a minute,” pleaded the cat. “I have some advice for you.”

“I am getting so much advice,” thought Hansel, “that I am afraid I shall be a wise man before I have made my fortune”; but he said aloud, “All right, what is it? I can carry it in another pocket.”

“The second time that a giant asks you a question, be sure to answer, ‘With salt.’”

“With salt, with salt,” repeated the boy. “To the first question I am to answer ‘Yes,’ and to the second I must say, ‘With salt.’ I certainly hope I shan’t meet any giants, but if there’s nothing harder to do than

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to answer a few questions, I can surely do that. Good-bye again, I'm going on till I find my fortune."

"But there's no good fortune down this road," said the cat. "Whoever passes this lake comes to trouble. Turn back and choose another road."

The thought of that long, long hill with the rolling stones was not very pleasant, and Hansel hesitated; but the cat looked at him so earnestly that at last he answered:—

"All right, pussy, I'll go back and I won't lose the little white seed."

"And don't forget to say 'With salt' to the second question," cried the cat.

"No, I won't. Good-bye, pussy, good-bye."

Climbing the long hill was not nearly so hard as he had expected, for he had rolled so many of the round stones from the path

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as he went down. Then, too, the sun was no longer directly overhead. Indeed, the air grew cooler and cooler, and when he came to where the four roads met, it was so cold that he had to blow on his fingers to keep them from being stiff and numb.

“I suppose a boy can seek his fortune whether it is hot or cold,” thought Hansel, and he set off bravely to walk in the third road. This seemed to lead directly across a vast plain; but he could not see very far, for there were thick clouds of dust blowing in little whirlwinds. “All this dust must come from some great city,” thought the boy. “Perhaps I shall come to it before long. I will go straight to the Lord Mayor, and say, ‘Sir Lord Mayor, is there anything for a boy to do to make his fortune?’ He will answer, ‘Yes, one of my ships is all ready to sail. You may sail with her, and if you have anything to venture, perhaps

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you will make your fortune in one voyage. What have you to send?' Then I'll say, 'Sir Lord Mayor, I have a black seed and a white one.' No, I forget, if he happens to be a giant, I must say 'Yes' to the first question. That will be such nonsense that he will think I am a philosopher, and he will say, 'I need another counselor, and I'll take you. You shall have a long red gown and a white wig, and every morning before breakfast you shall have a great piece of red, red gold.' I will say 'Thank you, I — ' "

Without thinking what he was about, Hansel had been talking aloud; and now the words were fairly blown from his lips, for a great storm had suddenly arisen. Big hailstones beat upon him. He was thrown into the brambles and against the stones. His cap was lost, his clothes were torn, and he was almost exhausted when at last he

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managed to get into the shelter of a high rock that kept the biting wind from him.

It seemed to him that he had hardly taken three long breaths before he heard a loud buzzing. "Come and help us," it said; "come and help us."

"I knew cocks could talk," thought Hansel in surprise, "and cats can, of course, but I never heard bees talk before. They must be in some great trouble. I can't do anything to help them, that's sure, for it is all I can do to get my breath."

"Come and help us," buzzed the bees, until Hansel could not bear to hear their pleading any longer and he asked: —

"What is the matter?"

"Our hive is blown over," they replied. "The storm came up so suddenly that many bees are away, and when they come back, they will not know where to go if

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the hive is not in its place. Do put it back for us."

"Surely, I can do so much for them if I am tired," thought Hansel; and he asked, "Where does your hive belong?"

"On top of this high rock," they replied.

"I should n't think it would stay there in this wind," said Hansel to himself, "but I suppose they know best. People say that bees are wise, and maybe they know some way of making it firm." — "I don't know whether I can climb the rock in this storm," he said aloud, "but at least I can try."

So Hansel took up the beehive carefully and began to climb. It seemed at every step as if the wind would surely blow him away; but he kept on and on, and at last he was at the top of the rock and had put the hive into the place that the bees

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pointed out. The storm grew worse and worse until it almost seemed as if the rock itself would be blown over.

“I don’t see how your hive is going to stay there,” said Hansel. “The moment I let go, it will fall down and be blown to nobody knows where.”

“Please stay and hold it for us,” the bees pleaded anxiously.

“It’s all I can do to hold my head on my shoulders,” replied Hansel.

But the bees still begged, “Do stay and help us, do help us.”

“All right, I’ll try it,” said Hansel, “but it looks as if the hive and the rock and myself would all blow away together.”

The wind blew as if it feared it would never have another chance and meant to make the best of this one. The rain fell, not in drops, it seemed to Hansel, or in pailfuls, but in whole pondfuls, in ocean-

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fuls. He threw one arm around the hive and the other around a jagged point of rock, and there he clung for dear life. It was a hard pull for the tired boy, but after a while the storm cleared as suddenly as it had arisen. Many of the wandering bees returned and made their way into the hive and were safe. The other bees buzzed a welcome to them, and Hansel could not help being glad that he had saved their home. They clustered around Hansel and buzzed their thanks into his ear. They gave him all the honey he could eat and a fine large piece of comb to carry away with him.

“But where are you going?” they asked.

“Everywhere and nowhere,” answered Hansel. “I haven’t any father or any mother or any place to stay in, and I am going out into the world to seek my fortune.”

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“There ’s no good fortune to be found on this road,” declared the bees. “You must go back to where the four roads meet and choose another.”

“There are roads enough in the world,” said Hansel with a laugh, “but somehow none of them seem to be the right ones.”

“Every one has his own road,” said the bees. “Some find it in one day, some in two days, and some in three days, but there is surely a road.”

“All right, I ’ll go back and try the road uphill,” Hansel said. “Bees are wise, I know. Can you tell me whether I shall find my fortune on that road? The mountain is so steep that I am sure I should break my neck if I had to come down it by night; and then, too, there are no more roads to try.”

“We must not say any more,” buzzed the

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bees, "but we can make you a gift that will be of help in time of need"; and they brought out from the farthest corner of the hive a tiny seed as yellow as their own honey. "Take good care of this," they said, "for the time will come when you will have need of it. And there is one thing more; we have some advice for you."

"I've had two pieces already," rejoined Hansel, laughing, "and yet I don't seem to be wise enough to find the right road."

"At least, we can tell you something that will keep you from going where you do not wish to go," buzzed the bees.

"Thank you kindly," said Hansel. "I will put it into my jacket pocket with the other pieces. When one has not much else to carry, he can surely carry a piece of advice. What is it, then?"

"To the third question that a giant asks you, be sure to answer, 'In the land and

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in the sea,'” replied the bees earnestly.
“Do not forget.”

“No, I’ll remember,” Hansel promised.
“To the first question I am to say ‘Yes’;
to the second, ‘With salt’; and to the third,
‘In the land and in the sea.’ I hope no one
will ask me a fourth question, for I’d have
to answer that all out of my own wit. Now
good-bye. Thank you kindly for the honey
and the seed and the bit of advice. I’ll
turn back and go up the mountain if I can
see to find the road.” He waved his hand
in farewell, turned back, and crossed the
plain once more.

Before long he was at the place where
the four roads met. He could not exactly
“choose” which one to take, for there was
only one left that he had not tried; but he
gazed for at least three minutes at the long,
winding way that disappeared in the shad-
ows. He fancied that there was a heavy

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stone castle at the top of the mountain, but it was fast growing dusky and he could not be sure whether what he saw was not a gray cloud. It was a lonely road to follow in the twilight, and Hansel could not help thinking of the other boys who were safe in their own homes; but he was a stout-hearted little fellow, and he said to himself, "I suppose that if a boy is seeking his fortune, he must seek it; and since the end of the road won't come to me, why, then, I'll go to the end of the road." And he set off bravely to climb the mountain.

The road wound about and went in many zigzags, but at last Hansel was at the top of the mountain. Sure enough, there was a great stone castle that towered up till the battlements really seemed to reach the clouds. Hansel walked timidly up to the gate and knocked. No one answered. He knocked again, for it was so

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dark and wild on the hill that he began to feel afraid. "If they will only let me come in," he thought, "and give me a bit of straw to lie on, I don't care for any grand fortune"; and he knocked a third time.

Then the gate was opened a little way, and a great coarse hand as large as Hansel's whole body was stretched out and pulled him in through the opening. Of course, the hand belonged to a giant, who was almost as tall as the walls of the castle. The boy ventured to put his head back and take one look at the giant's face. It would have been frightful enough in any case, for it looked so hateful; but it was especially startling because it had three eyes, one above each ear and one on the top of the head. The giant could see best with that, and now he bent his head over and glared at Hansel with it. This eye was red and



A GREAT COARSE HAND PULLED HIM IN

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fiery, and at its flashing the boy felt as though the lightning was about to strike him. The giant gazed a minute or two and then called:—

“Brothers Humpkin and Lumpkin, here ’s a boy.”

“Let ’s eat him, Brother Mumpkin,” cried two harsh voices, and immediately two more dreadful giants came shambling out of the castle keep. One had three ears, and the other had three mouths. This third giant was Lumpkin, and he was the most horrible of the three, for he was continually grating his teeth and mumbling his heavy lips.

“We ’ll eat him, we ’ll eat him,” they cried; but when they caught sight of the boy and saw how small and thin he was, they laughed scornfully.

“He ’ll be only a mouthful apiece for us,” said Humpkin. Lumpkin, however,

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began to feel the boy's ribs and thighs, pinching him now and then to see if the flesh was firm and solid.

"Maybe he'll not be so bad," said Lumpkin. "We'll put him into one of the dungeons, and in a day or two we'll have a feast. These little creatures are small, but they are tender."

Now one giant would have been enough to frighten anybody, but with three such monsters before him it is no wonder that Hansel was white with terror. Mumpkin held him up by the back of the neck as if he was a kitten and demanded:—

"Do they eat boys in the land of the Pogglywogs?"

If Hansel had answered, "I don't know," the giant would probably have retorted, "You'll find out that we do here," and perhaps have taken a bite on the instant, but Hansel in all his terror had not forgot-

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ten his promise to the cock, and he faltered, "Yes."

"Listen to that!" cried Humpkin. "Now we'll know how the Pogglywogs do it, for we must do like them if we want to grow any taller."

Then Mumpkin gave the boy a pinch to make sure that he was attending and asked in a voice that sounded like distant thunder:—

"How do they eat them?"

"With salt," answered the boy faintly.

"He says, 'With salt,'" repeated Mumpkin. "What's salt? I never saw any. You boy, where do they find salt?"

"In the sea and in the land," answered the boy.

"'In the sea and in the land,'" repeated Mumpkin. "There's one thing sure, we must have some salt, whatever it may be. Humpkin, if you will take the boy to the

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dungeon, I'll go out and look the land through for some salt."

So poor Hansel was taken to the dungeon and left there. Giants are usually dull, and although these monsters wanted him to grow fat, it never entered their stupid heads that they must give him anything to eat. They shut the door, locked and bolted it, and went away, thinking what a dainty morsel would be ready for them when Mumpkin came back with the salt.

"It won't take him long to find it," said Humpkin. "That third eye of his can see all there is to see."

"I wonder where he will go," said Lumpkin.

"Oh, not farther than the foot of the hill," declared Humpkin. "There is n't much land beyond."

While they were talking, Mumpkin was plunging down the hill. He kicked the

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great stones from his path as if they were only so many pebbles, and he tore up the bushes and little trees along his way. It was night, of course, but that made no difference, for, as any three-eyed person knows, one who has three eyes can see as well in the night as in the daytime. When he came to the foot of the hill, he looked around at the different roads. He did not know anything about salt and thought it was as likely to grow on trees as anywhere else, so he started to go through the forest. With two eyes he looked at the trees on either side of the way and with the third, the one on the top of his head, he kept close watch of the moon. "I heard once that the moon was made of green cheese," he said to himself, "and maybe salt is a kind of cheese."

Now Mumpkin was not at all used to thinking, and he was so tired by this effort that he had to sit down to rest. He fell

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asleep and slept a long while. He was awakened by a loud "Cock-a-doodle-doo!" directly in front of him. The giant rubbed his three eyes and looked around. A big handsome cock was strutting up and down in the path, looking at the monster as if he were a new kind of worm that might or might not be good to eat.

"Get out of the road!" roared the giant.

"With pleasure," replied the cock. It gave a little flutter with its wings and in a moment it was resting comfortably on the giant's left shoulder.

"Yah! Get off!" the giant growled.

"Certainly," the cock replied, "but if you knew how much I know, you would be glad to have me whisper in your ear."

"I'll wring your neck," roared the giant, and put up his hand to catch the cock; but in a twinkling the bird was on the limb

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of a tree higher than even a giant could well reach.

“Are you going farther down this road?” the cock asked.

“Yes, I am,” said the giant. “I am going to find salt; but it’s no business of yours.”

“May I give you a bit of advice?” asked the cock politely.

“Keep your advice to yourself,” the giant growled.

“But I have to give it,” said the cock. “That is what I am put here for. It is this: Do not go down this road any farther. There is no salt here, and if you go, something will surely happen to you.”

“Something might happen to you, you stupid little bunch of bill and feathers,” shouted the giant angrily, “but things don’t happen to folk as big as I am, I’ll have you know.” And he started off down

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the road faster than he had ever walked before in all his life.

For a long while nothing happened except that the trees grew taller and taller; but suddenly the giant heard a growling which sounded louder than any growling that he had ever heard before, and in a moment a dreadful creature came out of the woods. It was a thousand times as big as the giant. Its enormous tail switched from side to side. It walked on four legs, and when it stretched one of them out, the giant saw that it was armed with sharp claws almost as long as his whole body. The creature was covered with a thick growth of yellow and black hair which stood on end at the sight of the strange object in the road. It glared at him with horrible great yellow eyes, and then put out one big paw to touch him and rolled him over and over in the dust. Never was a giant

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so terribly frightened before. The monster tumbled him about and played with him awhile, then gave a great yawn which revealed a vast cavern of a mouth as red as a fiery furnace, and walked away.

The giant lay trembling, but after a time he shook himself and turned toward home. "Salt or no salt, I'll go no farther," he declared. "I'll go home, and I'll run faster than any giant ever ran before."

He ran as fast as he could, but somehow he did not get over the ground at all rapidly. It seemed a long way from one tree to another. He was tired and he was thirsty. He stopped at a clear, quiet little pool to get a drink. A beetle sat in the bottom of the pool, looking straight at him. "I never saw a beetle like that in the water before," growled the giant, and he made an ugly face at it. The beetle did the same, but made no reply. The giant drank what he

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wanted and went on. It was a long, long way. The sun rose and the sun set many and many a time, but at last the giant was at the gate of the castle.

“Let me in,” he cried. “I tell you, let me in.” He pounded on the gate with all his might, and at last he heard his brothers coming. “I’ll kill them,” he growled, “for keeping me out here,” and he thumped louder than ever. At last Lumpkin opened the gate.

“It is strange, is n’t it,” he said, “that Mumpkin does not come. I suppose he’s found something good to eat, another boy, maybe, and he means to keep it all for himself. I don’t care whether he comes or not, but I want that salt. Ugh! what a horrid beetle that is,” and he crushed it with his foot. This was the end of Mumpkin. The forest was no ordinary forest, of course, but an enchanted wilderness; and whoever

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went too far in it turned into some wild creature. The giant had not found it out, but he had really been a beetle for a long, long time, and the monster that had given him such a fright was only a playful cat.

The brothers shut the gate and went into the castle again. They were tired of waiting for a mouthful of roasted boy, but they were always afraid that the other race of giants, the Pogglywogs, would become larger than they; and now that they had heard that the Pogglywogs ate salt with their boys, they did not want to taste this one without it.

"I won't wait any longer," declared Lumpkin. "I'm going to find some salt, and what's more, I won't be so long about it as that stupid lubber." So the second giant set out to search for salt. When he came to the foot of the mountain, he looked

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at the three roads and concluded to go on the one that went still farther down. The rolling stones gave him considerable trouble, and more than once he had rather a hard fall because of them. He was half-stunned by the last tumble, and he lay on the ground a minute or two before he tried to get up. When he rose again and looked around him, there stood a cock quietly watching him.

“May I ask,” said the cock politely, “if you intend to go much farther on this road?”

“What ’s that to you?” growled Lumpkin, rubbing his bruised elbow and grating his teeth horribly. “I’ll eat you, I will. I always eat cocks.”

“May I give you a bit of advice?” asked the cock.

“No,” the giant thundered. “I can make advice for myself. Get out.”

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“But I have to give it,” said the cock quietly. “That is what I am put here for. This is it: Do not go down this road any farther. There is no salt here, and if you go, something will surely happen to you.”

“Something will happen to *you* !” shouted the giant, and with all three mouths at once he tried to bite the cock’s head off. The cock flew up on the limb of a great tree, far above the head of the giant, and sat there watching as the giant strode off down the hill.

It was not long before he came to a lake. Now the giant had never seen water in that form before. This looked smooth and easy to walk on, so he set out to walk on it instead of on the road. Even near the shore the water was deep, and in a little less than no time the giant was down on his knees in the lake, spluttering and storming and

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snarling and growling and grating his teeth together as if he meant to eat even the rocks and the sand.

“There are better ways of getting over the water than trying to walk on it,” said a voice pleasantly.

The giant staggered to his feet and looked around.

“Eh?” said he.

“There are better ways of getting over the water than trying to walk on it,” the voice repeated; and now the giant saw that it proceeded from a boat that was coming nearer and nearer. In the boat was a yellow-and-black cat, who bowed politely and sat waiting for him to speak.

“What’s that thing you’re in?” demanded the giant.

“This is a boat,” the cat replied. “With it one can easily go on the water.”

“Get out, I want it,” the giant growled.

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The cat's yellow eyes began to look fiery, but she asked very quietly : —

“Are you sure that you can manage it?”

“Of course I can; I am a hundred times as big as you.”

“But I have a collar around my neck, and you have none.”

“I'll have one, too,” the giant cried. “Where's the stuff you make it of?”

“There's some stuff you might use on the ground on the farther side of that big rock,” said the cat. “See that you make it thick enough.”

The giant picked up a great mass of the stuff. It was lead and it was exceedingly heavy, but he bent it and squeezed it and pulled it and punched it and jammed it and pounded it until he had made a collar big enough to go over his head with only the least bit of crowding. It would have

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taken at least ten common men to lift it, but the giant put it on without any trouble.

“Bring that boat to me,” he called in a voice that would have frightened most cats out of a year’s growth; but this one only looked at him and slowly rowed the boat up to the shore. Then she sprang out lightly and curled herself up on a warm rock. The giant stepped on the gunwale of the boat with one of his enormous feet. Then he lifted the other foot, and, of course, the boat tipped over just as any other boat would have done, and in a moment the giant lay on the bottom of the lake. His head with the leaden collar was down and his heels were up; and up they stayed, for this was the end of the three-mouthed giant Lumpkin.

“Folk that never use their heads ought not to mind losing them,” said the cat, as

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she yawned comfortably and stretched herself out to take a nap.

Meanwhile, several events had taken place in the castle of the three giants. Humpkin had more than once gone to the top of the tower and listened first with one ear, then with another, and then with all three; but not a sound could he hear of either Mumpkin or Lumpkin. "I rather think they are killed," he said, "and I'm glad of it, for now I'll eat that boy all by myself. I don't care anything about salt, whatever it may be, and I'll go straight to the dungeon and get him."

Now several events had been happening in the dungeon also. At first it was a very white-faced and badly frightened boy who lay there on the damp floor; but as hour after hour passed and no one came to harm him, he began to recover from his fright a little and to look about him to see if there

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was any way of making his escape. The walls were of stone, the window was far above his head, and the door was evidently locked and bolted. What could he do?

While he sat pondering, he thought he heard a sound on the other side of the wall as if some one was speaking. He could see a tiny crack in the wall, so he lay down on the floor and put his ear to the crack. Then he heard a voice that asked : —

“Who are you?”

“I’m a boy, and my name is Hansel. I came out to seek my fortune. The cock and the cat and the bees would n’t let me go on the other roads, and so I came here, and the giants caught me. They say they mean to eat me. Who are you?”

“I am a magician,” the voice replied.

“Then why don’t you tear the castle down or kill the giants or call up an earthquake or do something?” the boy cried.

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“I always thought magicians could do anything they chose.”

“So they can if they choose something that they can do,” declared the voice. “But even magicians,” he added, “cannot do everything without anything.”

“Can’t you draw a magic circle so the giants can’t touch you?” asked Hansel.

“I could if I had anything to draw it with,” said the magician, “but I have n’t.”

“I have n’t even a crumb of anything to eat,” said Hansel, “and I am hungry as hungry.”

“Have n’t you a bit of bread or a kernel of corn or a grain of wheat about you?”

“Not one. I have only three little seeds of nobody knows what; a black one that a cock gave me; a yellow one that some bees gave me; and a white one that a cat gave me. They ’re of no use; they would n’t make a mouthful for a sparrow.”

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“Maybe they will for a boy, though,” said the magician thoughtfully. “I should n’t be in the least surprised if they were magic seeds. At any rate, they are of no use as they are, and you may as well plant them and see what will come up.”

“There’s no earth to plant them in,” said Hansel.

“That’s no matter,” replied the magician. “Magic seeds do not need earth. Just lay one of them down in a corner and say over it:—

I plant thee, seed,
Now in my need.
Be not afraid
To lend thy aid.”

So many strange things had come to pass that Hansel was almost afraid to have anything to do with the seeds; but he finally decided to plant the yellow one, and then, if nothing dreadful happened,

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to plant the black one, and after that, the white. He laid the yellow one down gently, repeated the magician's spell over it, and turned away. Before he could get across the little room, he felt something touch his shoulder. It was a branch of a tree, and was loaded with bright red apples; another was full of thick slices of bread and butter well sprinkled with sugar; from another hung many little buckets of creamy milk; another was weighted down with cake and gingerbread; another with sugar cookies; and yet another with tender, juicy roast beef and roast chicken. While he stood gazing at all these things, the tree kept on growing; and even before the hungry boy could put out his hand for a single mouthful, it had almost reached the top of the room, and every branch had something good on it.

Hansel threw himself on the floor beside

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the crack in the wall and told the magician of the amazing thing that had happened. "I wish I could get through this wall," he said, "so I could give you something to eat. Can't you dig through it?" he asked eagerly. "Have n't you any knife?"

"The giants took it away," replied the magician; "but never mind. Since your seeds are magic seeds, there is hope for us, and I don't mind going hungry for a while. Be quick and plant another and see what will come of it."

Hansel planted the tiny black seed, saying over the same magic spell. He did not turn his back this time, you may be sure; but now, although a little shoot came up at once, it grew more slowly, and it was at least ten minutes before it bore any fruit. Even when the fruit appeared, it did not look very valuable, for it was only one pod,

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long and brown and thick. Hansel told the magician about it, and before he had fairly finished speaking, he heard something drop heavily on the floor behind him. The pod had ripened and burst and the fruit had fallen out—the biggest, sharpest, strongest jackknife that was ever made in all the world.

“Oh, oh!” cried Hansel. “Now, Mr. Magician, I can dig through this wall.”

That would not have been so easily done with any common knife; but this one actually seemed to dig of itself, for whether Hansel was holding it or not, it kept on working and the bits of stone kept on falling. It was not many minutes before the hole was large enough for a boy to creep through; and through it Hansel went with his hands full of bread and butter and gingerbread and roast beef.

If only there had been no giants to fear,

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the boy and the magician would have had a delightful time together. Even as it was, they had so much to tell that for a little while they forgot all about the third seed. At last the magician thought of it and he said:—

“There is no knowing how soon the giants may come upon us. Hurry back and plant the third seed and see what help that will give us.”

Then Hansel crept back and planted the little white seed. That was even slower than the black one in coming up; but yet it was not many minutes before it was up to Hansel's knees and had begun to form its fruit. Never was there such fruit seen before. It was perfectly white and round and hard. After a while it fell off, and Hansel in great disappointment carried it to the magician.

“Here it is,” he said, “but it is no

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good at all. It looks just like a piece of chalk."

Much to his surprise, the magician clapped his hands and cried:—

"This is best of all. Now we are safe. Come giant or dwarf or troll or demon, they cannot harm us."

Hansel was afraid the magician had gone mad, but in a moment he understood. The white fruit really was chalk, and in only two or three seconds longer than no time at all, the magician was down on his knees, drawing a magic circle about himself and the boy as fast as ever he could.

"There!" he said, with a deep sigh of relief. "Nothing can hurt us now. There's something else for you to know. The magic seeds were given to you, and, therefore, you have the right to ask three questions. What is the first?"

It did not take Hansel long to think what

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he wanted to know, and without a moment's delay he cried: —

“Please tell me where is the terrible giant with three eyes?”

“He lies dead outside the gate of the castle,” said a voice.

“Where is the one with the three mouths?”

“His feet are in the air, his head in the water, and he is drowned as dead as a stone,” replied the voice.

“And where is the one with the three ears?”

“He stands outside the dungeon and is just about to open the door,” was the reply; and sure enough, the bolts were drawn, the key was turned, and the giant Humpkin strode into the room.

“How did you get here, you young rascal, you?” he roared. “I put you into the other dungeon to wait till I came to eat

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you. You'll pay for this, you will." Humpkin caught him by the arm, or rather, tried to catch him, for the instant the giant put one foot within the circle, something or other struck him a heavy blow. He tried again, and this time he was struck so terribly that he howled with pain and fright and ran for his life, leaving all the doors wide open behind him.

"Come," cried the magician; "come quick!" He caught the boy by the hand and half dragged him out of the dungeon. "Stay there," he said when they had come to the courtyard, and he himself ran through the gate of the castle. Then, while Humpkin was half running and half rolling down the mountain, the magician, too, was running as fast as he could go, making a wide chalk mark entirely around the castle. When this was done, he went back into the court, not

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troubling himself to close the gate, and called to Hansel.

“Come, let’s go up into the tower,” he said, “and see what will happen.”

They climbed to the top of the highest tower and looked around. Pretty soon they saw Humpkin come stumbling up the hill, snarling and growling and by turns rubbing his head and shaking his great fist. “I’ll be there,” he muttered, “and then you’ll pay for this, you will. I’ll eat you both before you can say — ‘Oh! Oh!’” he screeched, for again he had touched the magic circle, and a third blow, worse than either of the others, had sent him a quarter of a league from the gate. He tried again and again, but as he made the third attempt, a swarm of bees flew into his face, buzzing and stinging so savagely that they drove him over the cliff. This cliff was so high that he broke into pieces long before

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he reached the bottom, such small pieces that as yet no one has ever found even one of them.

After the magician and Hansel had seen the last of the giant, they came down from the tower and began to look through the castle. Of course there were, as in every giant's castle, rooms upon rooms filled from floor to ceiling with silver and gold ; there were others fairly crammed with diamonds and rubies and emeralds and pearls.

"You will be the richest boy in the whole land," said the magician. "You are king, of course."

"Why, aren't you going to be king?" asked the boy, with wide-open eyes.

"King? No, not I. I am a magician," was the proud reply. "Only let me have a quiet tower where no one ever slams the doors or interrupts me when I am making

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my calculations, and I would not give a fig for all the gold and jewels in the castle. But come, now, and let us go down into the dungeons. There may be some one else shut up there."

Down into the dungeons they went. The giant's keys were sticking in the door of the dungeon where the magician had been shut up. Room after room was unlocked, but no one was to be seen.

"We must have been the only prisoners," said the magician. "There seem to be no more rooms."

"I thought I saw a little door out of that dark place under the stairs," Hansel said. "Maybe that's a room."

"We'll see," said the magician, and he tried key after key, but none of them fitted. "I fancy there's a touch of magic about this," he said thoughtfully. "Some magician must have been here and made this

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lock. There's one thing sure, what magic has done, magic can undo."

He drew a circle entirely around the little door and wrote some mysterious figures and signs within it. He had hardly finished the last one before the door flung itself open. There stood a tall, stately man, and by his side was a beautiful woman with her arm thrown closely around a young girl two or three years older than Hansel.

Now comes the strangest part of the whole story and the one that is hardest to believe, for these three people proved to be Hansel's father and mother and sister. They had really been stolen away by trolls, as their friends thought, and had been put into the dungeon of the giants for safe-keeping. The trolls had been overcome by other trolls who were stronger than they and put to death. The giants were not used to remembering things, and they had

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forgotten all about their prisoners. Luckily, Hansel's father had some magic food in his pockets, or else they would have starved long before. There they were, alive and well; and now Hansel, the lonely little boy whom nobody wanted, had a father and mother and sister, a powerful friend, and rooms upon rooms filled with gold and silver from floor to ceiling.

The doors of the castle keep were flung wide open. The sun shone in and the sweet, strong wind blew through and through it until every corner was fresh and pure. Little flowers began to grow in the courtyard. They showed their faces timidly at first, but soon there were great companies of them, bright and cheery and happy as ever flowers could be. Vines ran up the walls and peered over into the very keep of the castle. Some even slipped in through the gratings of the dungeons to see what kind

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of places they were. Night and day the gates stood open, for there were no enemies to be afraid of. Hansel grew into a tall young man, and he ruled the country so kindly and wisely that the people declared there never was in all the wide world so good a sovereign as their own King Hansel the First.

THE STAR PRINCESS

THE STAR PRINCESS

THERE was great rejoicing at the royal palace. Flags waved from every tower. Bright-colored silken streamers floated from every window. Each maidservant had been given a new gown and each servingman a broad silver piece. Little bells were tinkling joyously. Soft strains of music came from one corner and another. The rejoicing was not only at the palace, but throughout the Island Kingdom. Men and women took a holiday from their work. Children went about the streets singing. When night came, every window was ablaze with light and every hilltop was glowing with a bonfire; for the King and Queen had a little daughter. Her eyes were as blue as the ocean, her skin was as white as its foam, and her

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hair was as yellow as the gleam of the sunlight on the sand.

By and by there was a magnificent christening feast. Kings and nobles and princes and witches and magicians and fairies were all invited. Every one came and every one gave the beautiful baby Princess his very best wishes.

“The King is a happy man to have a child like that,” said one guest to another as they were leaving the palace.

“True,” replied the other, “but he did not look happy. Did not you notice how troubled his face was and how strangely he acted? When some one pushed the curtains aside for a bit of air, did you see how quickly he ran to the window and drew them together again with his own hands, and looked at the baby as if he was afraid it would disappear at a ray of daylight? I am sure that he is anxious about some-

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thing. The Queen is not. She is as happy as the day is long."

"I should think she would be. She has everything in the world that she wants, and not one thing to trouble her."

When all the guests had gone and the candles had burned low, the King went to the Queen and said : —

"My Queen, I have something very sad to tell you. Can you bear it?"

"I can bear anything with such a child as this," she replied.

Then the King said : —

"When my father was a young, young man, he was so bewitched by the spells of a mermaid that he was ready to give up his kingdom and follow her into the sea. His councillors begged of him to leave her, the court magicians tried in every way to break her spells, but they could not succeed. While

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they were waving their wands and saying over their charms, she lay on a rock out in the sea and laughed them to scorn. 'Go on,' she said. 'Keep him if you can. I'll have his soul yet in spite of all you can do.' At last all the priests in the kingdom came together. Each one took a great vase of holy water, and they walked entirely around the island, sprinkling the shore as they went. The wicked mermaid could not cross the ring of holy water. Day after day she lay on the rock by the shore, calling and calling the Prince to come to her; but the priests had done their work so thoroughly that he had no longer any wish to go to the wicked creature. When she found that she had lost him, she shrieked with rage and anger and pronounced seven dreadful curses upon him. Six of them the priests could overthrow, but there was one over which they had no power, because it did not affect

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the Prince himself, but his first grand-child."

"And that is our baby!" said the Queen, clasping the little Princess closer in her arms.

"Yes," replied the King, "and the curse was this: If she once looks upon the ocean before the end of her eighteenth year, sorrow shall come to her and to all who love her."

The King and the Queen talked together sadly about what they should do to save their little daughter. The kingdom was one large island. The palace was on a high hill in the very middle of the island, and from every room in the palace the ocean could be seen.

"Could n't we give up the kingdom and go somewhere to live far, far away from the ocean?" asked the Queen, with tearful eyes.

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“No,” replied the King. “There is no heir to the throne save our little daughter; and if I should go away, there would be war. I have no right to bring war upon my people even to save my child.”

All night long they talked and planned, and when morning came, they hoped they had found a way to save the Princess. A band of white silk was bound about the pretty blue eyes, and four of the most trusty women in the kingdom were chosen to be the child’s nurses. These were the orders that the King gave them:—

“Two of you must be with her by night and two by day. She must never be left alone for one moment. The band about her eyes must never be removed except at night, and then it must be replaced before the first ray of light in the morning.” If the Princess passed her eighteenth birth-

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day in safety, each one of them was to have ten thousand pieces of gold.

Year after year went on, and the Princess still wore the bandage over her eyes. If she ventured to lay a finger upon it, she was punished as severely as if she had been the child of a peasant; but in everything else she did exactly as she liked. Whatever she asked for was always given her and whatever she wished to have done was done at once. Some princesses would have become haughty and disagreeable, but this one was always kind-hearted and unselfish.

The King had made no secret of the sad story. Indeed, every one in the kingdom knew it except the Princess herself; and the people loved her so much that they were almost as eager as her parents for her to pass her eighteenth birthday in safety. "They say her eyes are like stars," whis-

The Star Princess

pered the people ; and gradually they forgot the many names that had been given her when she was christened and spoke of her only as the Star Princess. Wherever she went, she was guarded not only by two of her nurses, but also by all of her father's subjects who chanced to be in sight. She had never seen the ocean or the sun or had even a single glimpse of daylight, and yet she was the happiest, merriest little maiden in the world. One reason for this was that she did not know that she was at all different from other people. When little girls were brought to play with her, their eyes were always bandaged like her own, and they played only such games as they could play blindfolded. No one was allowed even to mention the sun or the daylight or the ocean in her presence. " Why do people never uncover their eyes until the candles are lighted for dinner ? "

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she once asked. And the nurses replied, "Because before that time eyes are so ugly that no one can bear to look at them."

One day she asked suddenly, "What is the strange sound that we hear all the time? It is like murmuring and sighing and sobbing and singing. Sometimes it groans and sometimes it almost laughs. Nurses, what is it?"

"It is your greatest enemy," the nurses replied.

"It must be a dragon," thought the Princess, and she asked, "Why doesn't my father drive it away?"

"He would if he could," the nurses answered, "but it is stronger than he. It never can come any nearer, however; so all its groaning will not hurt you."

As time passed and the Star Princess grew older, she asked more and more questions. "She must be amused," declared

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the King. He sent out his orders and one morning a great troop of workmen appeared at the palace with spades and pickaxes. They were to dig down, down, into the earth, for there a wonderful ballroom was to be made which the King meant should be the most beautiful one in all the world. The walls were of white marble, and over them from floor to ceiling were most exquisite traceries all made in jewels. There were trees drawn with emeralds and beryl, beds of scarlet poppies made of the clearest and most brilliant rubies; there were roses made of pearls and garnets and topaz stones; there were forget-me-nots of the bluest turquoise; there were violets of amethyst; and all about and among the trees and flowers were birds of sapphires and diamonds. In this room the Star Princess was always safe, for not a ray of sunlight could ever enter it. It was anything but

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gloomy, however, for when the hundreds of candles were lighted, it was such a blaze of brightness and color that one might almost fancy it was the very home of the rainbows. It was no wonder that people came from near and far to see the marvelous room, for there was not another one like it in all the world. Here entertainments of all sorts were given, for the King was ready to do anything to amuse the Star Princess and keep her from being lonely or unhappy or from asking questions that he did not wish to answer.

At last she came to the end of her eighteenth year. The next day, at precisely four o'clock in the morning, she would be eighteen years old, and then there would be no more danger. The King and Queen were so happy that they hardly knew what to do. There was to be a splendid ball, of course, on the night of her birthday, and

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they had busied themselves in planning to make it the most brilliant fête that the Island Kingdom had ever seen.

“But I should so like to have her all to ourselves on that day,” the Queen had said wistfully. “Could n’t we give the ball on the eve of her birthday? She will be with us and with the whole roomful of dancers. Nothing could possibly happen to her then.”

The King was not quite pleased with the idea, but he had finally yielded, and the ball had been arranged to come on the eve of her birthday.

Invitations were sent to the kings and queens and princes and princesses of many and many a kingdom, and every one was accepted. For seven days before the ball, ships whose sails were of cloth of silver and cloth of gold were continually coming up to the royal wharves. All day long the King’s

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golden chariots were going and coming between the palace and the shore to bring up the guests. There was music and feasting and merriment of all sorts, and on the evening of the seventh day came the ball. After all were assembled, the King led in the Star Princess. She was dressed in a gown of white, of some wonderful material that glowed like opals in a soft, subdued light and flashed like diamonds when the light was stronger. Her golden hair almost touched the floor, and gleamed like sunshine. Around her waist and her neck were rows and rows of pearls, and above her forehead shone one diamond star. She was so lovely that more than one noble prince said to himself, "She is surely a fairy. No mortal maiden was ever so beautiful."

Among the guests there was one who had not been invited, but who was, nevertheless, the most welcome of all. He was

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the son of the greatest king in that part of the world, but in his babyhood he had been stolen away by trolls. He had just been rescued and was on his way to take possession of his kingdom. When his ship came near the Island Kingdom, strains of music floated down from the palace, and there at the wharves lay the royal vessels of many and many a sovereign with the royal pennants streaming in the wind.

“What does that mean?” the Prince asked.

“It must be a great ball,” replied his attendants.

“I never went to a ball in my life,” said the Prince; and he added with a grim smile, “We did not have balls in the palace of the trolls.”

“Would your Highness wish to attend this one?” suggested his companions, for they, too, had much curiosity to see what

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was going on in the Island Kingdom. "Of course your Highness knows that there is no court on this side of the world that would not feel honored by your presence."

The end of it was that the Prince, too, moored his vessel at the royal wharves and rode up to the palace in the royal chariot, and received a most royal welcome. He was presented to the Star Princess at once, of course, and from that moment he could not keep his eyes from her. He danced with her again and again. He seized every opportunity to talk with her, and she was very willing to listen. He told her about his having been stolen away by trolls. "But now," he said, "I have a good ship. The sea is calm, the sun is bright, there is a fair wind, and soon I shall be in my own kingdom."

The Star Princess looked puzzled. "I think I can guess what a ship is," she

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said. "It must be a little like a palace; but I don't know what the sea is or the sun."

The Prince stared in amazement. "Why, the sun is above us and it gives us warmth and light," he said; "though I am sure it never shone so bright as your beautiful eyes."

"I have never seen this strange sun," the Star Princess said. "Candles give light, but how can there be any light without them?"

"Can she be out of her right mind?" thought the Prince. He said no more about the sun, but began to talk about the beautiful room and the jewels that were flashing and gleaming.

The Star Princess, however, had no idea of dropping the subject. "But what is the sea?" she asked. "You said you came in your ship on the sea. What is the sea?"

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When the Prince looked into her clear, calm blue eyes, he could not believe that she was not in her right mind, and he began in a dazed fashion to try to tell her about the sea. "It 's water," he said, "and it lies all around the island, and ships sail on it."

"Does it murmur and sing and sigh and moan and laugh?" asked the Star Princess eagerly.

"Why, yes, I suppose it does," replied the Prince, a little doubtfully.

"Then it must be the dragon," declared the Star Princess. "Surely you have seen the dragon. My nurses say that it lies around the island, but that it will never hurt me. Is the sea a dragon?"

"Yes — no — the sea is just the sea," returned the puzzled young Prince. "I can't explain it exactly, but if you should look out of your window, you would see it,

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I am sure. It must be in view from every window in the palace. Look out to-morrow morning at sunrise. The sea is beautiful. It is dark and blue, it is like your own glorious eyes. I am so eager to see them in the daylight."

"Is daylight before dinner?" the Star Princess asked. "People's eyes are very ugly before dinner, you know; and that is why they always wear bandages over them till the table is spread and the candles are lighted." Then the Star Princess was called away to meet some other one of the great folk who had come to the ball, and she saw no more of the Prince.

All night long and until three o'clock in the morning the dancing and feasting and merriment went on. Soon after three the Star Princess left the room, and her going was the signal for the breaking-up of the ball. The Prince lingered, and when

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he made his farewell to the King and the Queen, he asked if he might speak with them on a most important matter. Of course they said yes, for of course they guessed what it was. Then he told them that the Star Princess had won his heart, and he begged of them to give her to him to be his bride. "I know well that I am not worthy of her," he said humbly, "but I will do everything in my power to make her happy. At her slightest wish I will give my wealth and my life as freely as you would pour out this glass of water," and he caught up a glass of water that stood on the banquet table and emptied it.

The King and the Queen were glad and they were sorry. They liked the bearing and manner of the young Prince, and they knew that he was the sovereign of the richest kingdom in that part of the world.

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They were glad to have their daughter become his queen, but it did seem hard that they should not have her to themselves for a while after the time had come when they could enjoy her without having to guard her and watch her so carefully. At last the King said : —

“ If it is the wish of our daughter, we will give her to you for your bride, but you must first leave her with us for a year and a day that we may accustom ourselves to the thought of losing her.”

Of course the Prince could only agree to so moderate a condition as this. Then they told him the story of the mermaid's curse, and that on her first day of freedom no one but her father and her mother were to see her; and he went away to wait impatiently until her birthday should have passed.

Now when the Star Princess left the ballroom and went to her own room, two

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of the nurses went with her as usual. She had little to say, for her thoughts were all on the young Prince and his words to her. "The sun — the sea," she said to herself; "what can they mean?" Then she remembered that he had said, "Look out of your window at sunrise and you will see it." Just what "sunrise" meant, she did not know; but whatever it might be, she meant to look out of the window just once before the nurses put back the band over her eyes. She said to one of them: —

"Nurse, I am so thirsty. Will you get me some water from the north side of the well that is on the north side of the palace."

For a moment the nurse hesitated. Then she said to herself, "The servants are not up yet, and it would be a pity to call one just for this. To-day is her eighteenth birthday, and nothing can harm her

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now," so one nurse started to go down the stairs. The other nurse was putting away the opal-like gown and the diamond star and the ropes of pearls. She stepped into another room for a moment, and the Star Princess quickly pulled the curtains apart and took her first look at the sunrise and the sea. She gazed and gazed at them. It was all so beautiful that she could not turn away, and when the nurse came back, there she stood.

"O my Princess," the nurse exclaimed, "what have you done, what have you done!" Just then the bell on the castle rang, "One — two — three — four!" It was four o'clock in the morning, and the Star Princess was full eighteen years of age. Then the nurse thought, "Ten thousand broad pieces of gold is a great deal to lose. It was only a moment before the time, and surely no harm is done. Perhaps it will never be known."

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She concluded to say nothing about the matter, and to the Star Princess she said, "I thought you must have hurt yourself, and I was frightened. Now go to your bed and rest awhile, for to-day you are to be happier than ever before."

The Star Princess was so used to obeying her nurses that she went meekly to bed and even allowed them to put the band over her eyes as usual; but she was puzzled and confused. In that one long look she had found that no dragon, but a thing more beautiful than anything she had ever seen before even in her dreams lay around the Island Kingdom. What could it mean? Why had she never been allowed to see it? What was that glorious light that came up from the blue and was a thousand times brighter than the candles? Over and over she said to herself, "Sun — sea — ship," but she could not solve the mystery. She

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lay as if asleep until the time came to go to her father and her mother. Then she heard the whole story of the wicked mermaid and the seventh curse. "Now you are free," they said joyfully. She took a hand of each parent and roamed over the palace from garret to cellar, gazing from window after window upon the glorious ocean and the deep blue sky. They went out of doors, and she saw the trees, the flowers, and the birds. She watched the rippling of the waves on the shore. Every hour was more delightful than those before it. At last came the glory of the sunset, and she exclaimed, "Oh, this is even more beautiful than the sunrise!"

"But what do you know of the sunrise?" her father asked gravely, and she told him of her one look from the window. Both her parents were troubled, but the Star Princess was so happy that they could not bear to alarm her. Then, too, they said to them-

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selves, "It was only a moment before the clock struck, and surely no harm can come of it."

So the happy day went on. When evening was fully come, the mother sat with her arm about her daughter and the father told her very gently about the love of the Prince and his wish to make her his queen. "To-morrow you will see him," said the King, "and if you are willing to be his wife, he will come for you in a year and a day."

It was easy to see from the face of the Star Princess that the Prince would be welcome when he came. "We will talk more of this in the morning," said the King, as he kissed his daughter good-night.

The Star Princess went to her own rooms, and after her maids had left her, she was alone for the first time in her life. She drew aside the curtains and stood gazing upon the ocean in the moonlight. She listened

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to its music. At first it seemed to murmur peacefully to itself. Then she fancied that it sobbed and moaned. Then she heard clearly a sweet voice that called, "Come to me, come, maiden, come to me!" It was a richer, more exquisite melody than she had ever heard before; and as she listened, she found herself answering, "Yes, I will come, I will come." She went softly down the stairs and out of the door. Every one else in the palace was asleep, and no one hindered her. She slipped down the hillside in the shadows and went nearer and nearer to the shore. The voice still called. Sometimes it was low and gentle, sometimes it was loud and strong; but whether low or loud, it drew the Star Princess toward it as if it were a magic cord. She followed it along the shore until she found herself on a steep cliff that towered far above the sea. The waters beat upon the

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rocks at its base, the breakers boomed and thundered; but out of all the wild uproar still came that enchanting voice, calling, "Come to me, come to me, come, come!" Straight to the very edge of the cliff went the Star Princess. For a moment she thought of her father and her mother, of the Prince who was coming in the morning to tell her of his love, and she drew back; but the voice called with a bewitching sweetness and charm, "Come, Star Princess, come." She held out her arms and answered, "Yes, I come," and sprang from the edge of the cliff.

A triumphant howl rang out above all the roaring of the waters: —

"I have you now, grandchild of a faithless prince, and you shall pay the forfeit of his falseness. You did not see the ocean for eighteen years, but you shall see it now." And the cruel mermaid, for she it

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was who had bewitched the Star Princess and drawn her from her home, laughed so savagely and unpityingly that the heart of the maiden almost ceased to beat.

She was alone and in the hands of the wicked mermaid. "Oh, my father, my mother!" she cried. "My Prince, my Prince, save me, save me!" But the mermaid clutched her roughly and dragged her to the palace of her son, the merking who ruled the waters for leagues around.

"Here is the grandchild of the man who scorned my love," she shrieked. "What shall she suffer? By what death shall she die?"

The merking looked upon the Star Princess. Her eyes were cast down in fear, her hair was wild and tangled, her cheeks were pale, and she trembled with fright, but even then she was beautiful, and the merking said:—



“SHE IS FAIRER THAN ANY OF MY MAIDENS”

The Star Princess

“She is fairer than any of my maidens. She shall not be put to death to-day. I will have her for my wife, and when I am tired of her, then you may torment her and kill her as you will. Come with me, earth maiden.”

“Oh, no, no,” cried the Star Princess. “Let me die! I will never be your wife.”

“It is far too noble a fate for her,” grumbled the cruel mermaid. “Such as she should not have honors like that. Will you be my son’s bride or will you not?” she demanded.

“Oh, no, never, never!” answered the Star Princess, with a shudder.

“Then you shall be tormented with such tortures as you never dreamed of,” cried the mermaid angrily; and she caught hold of the Star Princess to drag her away.

“Not yet,” interposed the merking.

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“You know how to give hard tasks. Give her a task or two, and she will be glad enough to be free from you and come to me.”

“Tasks she shall have,” declared the mermaid, “and such ones that she will plead and beg to come to you. Come, earth creature,” she called ; and, clutching her prisoner, she dragged her away to a horrible cavern full of sea-monsters. To one of them she said, “Go with the earth creature and do not let her out of your sight.” Then she turned to the Star Princess. “My son’s throne needs jewels,” she said. “Go, and within three days bring me ten thousand pearls.”

The Star Princess was in despair ; but it was worse, she thought, to be the bride of the merking than even to have the dreadful sea-monster for a jailer, and she followed him meekly.

The Star Princess

“Where do you intend to go?” he asked.

“Indeed, I do not know,” she replied.

“Then you may as well stay here,” the sea-monster said, with a horrible grin.

“Oh, I don’t dare,” moaned the Star Princess. “What shall I do! what shall I do!”

Even the sea-monster could not help being just a little sorry for her, and he said grimly:—

“You can come this way if you like. It is better than staying there.” And she followed him gladly, for anything was better than staying with the merking and his mother.

As they went on through the water, she noticed a little sculpin that seemed determined to go with them. It was ugly, indeed, but it kept between her and the sea-monster, and she was grateful. Some-

The Star Princess

how she felt that the little creature was her friend; and when it came nearer and even touched her hand, she did not draw back, but was glad of its company.

After a long, long while, the sea-monster stopped before a bank of jagged rocks.

“There are the pearl oysters,” it said, “thousands of them. Perhaps you can get them to give up their treasures.” The creature laughed scornfully and added, “You can’t get away very well, and I shall take a nap. Wake me when you get your pearls.”

The Star Princess was in despair, but as soon as the monster was fairly asleep, the little sculpin had something to say.

“Star Princess,” he whispered, “I was once stolen by trolls.” The Star Princess started, for her Prince, too, had met the same fate. “When I was rescued,” con-

The Star Princess

tinued the sculpin, "the troll was forced to make me three gifts. One of them was that I should have the power to persuade all honest creatures of earth, air, and water to do my will. This ledge is covered with oysters, and I think they will gladly give you their pearls." He swam close to the ledge and spoke softly to the oysters. In a moment pearls were falling like raindrops. The Star Princess picked them up, and there were far more than ten thousand. She carried them back to the mermaid, and the mermaid cried:—

"So you got the pearls, did you? That was an easy task. How did you like your journey? You shall have another to-morrow."

When the morning had come, the mermaid said:—

"I wish to know how many grains of sand there are on the beach that lies to

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the north of my son's kingdom. One of my creatures shall take you there, and if you do not count aright, then at the end of three days you shall lose one of those blue eyes that you are so proud of. A wooden one is good enough for a girl who cannot use what she has."

The Star Princess was put in the charge of a sea-monster far more horrible than the one that had gone with her before. "I shall have to show you the way to the beach," he said, "but you'll get no other help from me, understand that."

The Star Princess was in despair, for the friendly sculpin was nowhere to be seen, and how could she ever count all the grains of sand on a beach. When they had come to the shore, she took up a handful of sand and tried to count the grains, but of course it was hopeless.

"You may as well kill me," she cried

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to the sea-monster, "for I cannot do this."

"Oh, the mermaid will kill you in her own way. You need not fear that she will leave you alive," retorted the sea-monster, and grinned at her most horribly. "Go to work. For three days you are to count grains of sand; but be quiet about it and don't disturb me." In two minutes the creature was fast asleep.

Suddenly the Star Princess heard all around her a gentle rustling, as if the softest of the breezes were touching lightly the tiniest leaves of the forest. In a moment she found that it was made by thousands upon thousands of little sand fleas hopping toward her. "Our friend, the sculpin, has asked us to help you," they said, "and we have been counting as fast as ever we could. Lie down and rest, and in one hour longer, the task will be done."

The Star Princess

When the third day had come, the sea-monster took the maiden back to the mermaid.

“How many grains of sand are on the beach?” the mermaid demanded.

The Star Princess told her, and she had to admit that it was the right number. She was very angry to find that the task had been done, and she actually shrieked with rage. Then she cried, “Will you marry my son, you wretch, or will you go on another journey? You need not think that you will get off from this one so easily. Will you marry him?”

“No, I will not,” declared the Star Princess; and she would not yield even when the mermaid gnashed her teeth in a fury and screamed, “You shall have a task to-morrow that is a task. This is only child’s play.”

When morning had come, the mermaid said:—

The Star Princess

“The sharks once rebelled against my son, and he has never punished their leader as he deserved. Go you to the Waters of the Sharks, take their king prisoner, and bring him to me to pay the penalty of his rebellion. One of my people will show you the way.” And she pointed out a sea-monster more dreadful than both the others put together.

The monster led the way, and the Star Princess followed. “Oh, if I could only see my father and my mother once more,” she thought. “How could I think the voice of the mermaid was sweet! I should be so happy if I were only the lowest servant in my father’s house. And the Prince — I wonder —”

“Here you are,” said the monster; “that is, you are as near as I intend to go. I’m not going to risk my head and fins in the Waters of the Sharks. I’ll wait here till the

The Star Princess

third day, but I rather think the sharks will save me the trouble of carrying you home."

Now while all this was going on in the Water World, there was the deepest amazement and sorrow in the Island Kingdom, for the Star Princess had disappeared. In the morning of the second day of her nineteenth year, her maids waited and waited for her call. At last they went to her door. It stood ajar, and they could see that she was not in the room. "She is so happy in being free," they said, "that she has slipped out into the palace gardens to see the world in the early morning." So they searched the gardens through and through. They ran hither and yon, and looked into every corner of the palace; but no Star Princess was to be seen. Then they went to the King, weeping

The Star Princess

and wailing and wringing their hands, and cried: —

“ O your Majesty, the Star Princess has disappeared! Oh, oh, what shall we do! what shall we do!”

The royal guests were still at the palace, and in three minutes every one of them had heard the distressing news. Then began a search that was a search. Every corner, every crack of the great palace was looked into, not only once but over and over, for each one thought that he might perhaps see something that the others had passed by. Then the gardens were searched and the forests and the fields. All the subjects of the kingdom gave up their work and joined in the hunt. Every inch of the seashore was gone over and over, until it seemed as if some one had looked under every blade of grass and into every mouse-hole. They went to the cliff, of course, but

The Star Princess

the light steps of the Princess had left no trace, and they could not even guess what had become of her.

The King was heartbroken, and the Queen lay on her bed, moaning her life away; but the young Prince was even more wretched than they. "Her father and mother have had her all those eighteen years," he said to himself, "but I have found her only to lose her again."

After the Island Kingdom had been searched through and through, the King sent out every ship in the navy to look for his child, and all the stranger kings and princes whose ships lay at the royal wharves put out to sea to try to find the Star Princess. They sailed north and south and east and west, but they all came back with lowered flags and the same report, "We cannot find her."

The days passed. The royal guests bade

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farewell to the sorrowing King and Queen and sailed away to their own kingdoms, all but one, the faithful young Prince. "I cannot leave the place where I first met her," he said to her parents. "Will you let me stay with you for a time?" Of course they were only too glad to have him; but one morning the young Prince, too, was missing. He had vanished from the Island Kingdom as suddenly as the Star Princess. It was known that he had left his rooms in the palace late in the evening; but this was a thing that he often did, especially on such moonlight nights as the one on which the Princess had vanished. So many times he had been seen pacing to and fro on the sand that no one thought of watching him or of noticing when he returned to the palace.

After he, too, disappeared, the beach was searched as closely as it had been for

The Star Princess

the Star Princess. The print of his footsteps was seen and they were traced up and down the sand, then to one side toward a high hill. On the path up the hill, little twigs had been broken, and here and there a leaf had been bruised and crushed; and so it was known that he had climbed to the top of the hill. He was traced still farther, to the very edge of a cliff that overhung sharp rocks and a wild commotion of breakers. The people looked upon them sadly and shook their heads. "Poor Prince," they said, "his love for the Star Princess has made him mad and he has flung himself over the cliff." But one sage old man, who had seen many strange things in his long life, shook his head and muttered, "Not madness but magic."

If the breakers that beat on the base of the cliff had chosen to speak, they, too, would have said, "Not madness but magic."

The Star Princess

The Prince had gone out on the shore, as he so often went, and that night he heard the same sweet voice that had called the Star Princess into the sea. "Come to me, come to me," it cried, now low and sweet, now loud and strong, but ever so powerful that even the Prince could hardly resist it. Suddenly, in the midst of the strength and the sweetness, there came a wail that tore his very heart. "My Prince, my Prince," it said, "save me, save me!" And without a glance behind him he sprang straight off the cliff and into the raging sea.

"Aha, now I have two of you!" shrieked the mermaid with fiendish delight. Then, when she looked upon him more closely and saw how tall and noble and beautiful he was, she hesitated. "I will not tear you limb from limb," she said. "I have a daughter who will soon take a husband, and if she chooses you, you may live."

The Star Princess

“I will have no false mermaid for a wife,” declared the young Prince, as boldly as if he had still been in the palace of the Island Kingdom.

“You will not?” shrieked the mermaid. “How dare you insult my daughter, you earthborn creature!” She waved her hands to and fro before his face. His eyes closed. and for a moment he was in a deep slumber. When he awoke, the mermaid had gone. He was alone, but he was no longer a handsome young prince; she had put upon him the form of a sculpin.

Prince or sculpin, he had but one thought, to find the Star Princess; and he swam as rapidly as he could, first in one direction, then in another, until he came in sight of the Waterworld den where the mermaid and her monsters dwelt. It was just at the moment when the mermaid was sending out the Star Princess and

The Star Princess

the sea-monster to find the ten thousand pearls.

“I cannot rescue her yet,” said the Prince to himself, “but at least I can save her from the torments of the mermaid.” So he kept out of sight until the mermaid had gone back into her den. Then he hastened after the Star Princess, and it was he who had kept between her and the monster and who had persuaded the pearl oysters to give her of their pearls. It was he, too, who had induced the sand fleas to count the grains of sand for her. She did not know this, and she had seen no more of him after her first journey. Now she stood in terror, gazing into the Waters of the Sharks. The horrible creatures swam about and dived and rolled over and showed their sharp, white teeth. The Star Princess was in an agony of terror. She could not run away, for the sea-monster was behind her,

The Star Princess

and he was almost as dreadful as the sharks.

“Go on,” he cried mockingly. “Tell them you want their king. The earth-girl who will not marry our merking is only fit for sharks’ food.”

The Star Princess looked so pitiful and so beautiful that even the sea-monster was as nearly touched as a monster could be. He muttered, “It *is* rather a pity to have her eaten up.”

Then he called to her:—

“Girl, earth-girl, if you will agree to marry our king, I will take you back without the shark, and if she is angry, I think I know a way to save you.”

“Oh, no, no,” she replied, shuddering. “I can never marry the merking.”

“Then go on and be devoured by the sharks,” growled the monster, “but you may as well be about it. If you keep me

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waiting much longer, I will eat you myself."

The Star Princess turned toward the Waters of the Sharks. As she gazed in terror, she saw the ugly little sculpin coming toward her, and behind him swam the whole company of sharks.

"Don't be afraid," the sculpin called as they swept by. "Only wait. You are safe."

The Star Princess waited. She was all alone in the vast ocean, for at the coming of the sharks, the sea-monster had fled for his life. She covered her eyes with her hands for fear she should see something dreadful; but it was not long before she felt a soft touch. It was the friendly sculpin. "Come quick," he said. "There is not a moment to lose. The sharks are fighting the merking and his monsters. Follow me. Do not be afraid, I can find the way, for the second gift of my troll jailer was

The Star Princess

that I should never fail to find the place that I sought."

The little sculpin swam to the land faster than ever sculpin had swum before, and the Princess ran after him faster than ever princess had run before. She dared not glance behind her for fear of seeing some of the horrible creatures. At last they were so far away that the sculpin knew there was no more danger of pursuit. They had come to the shore. There he stopped and said: —

"Star Princess, now you are safe. Rest for a little and then you shall go home to the palace of the Island Kingdom."

The Star Princess burst into tears of joy. "You have saved me," she cried. "What shall I do for you? My father is a king and he will give you whatever you ask. He will build a wall around an ocean for you if you wish and drive away from

The Star Princess

it every creature that would trouble you. He will — ” and there she stopped, for, try her best, she could not think of anything else that would be at all likely to please a sculpin.

The ugly little fish replied : —

“Star Princess, my rightful home is not in the sea, but on the land. I was born in a palace larger and more beautiful than that of your father. I fell into the hands of the wicked mermaid, and she threw over me the sculpin form that I now wear.”

“My father has wizards and magicians at his court,” cried the Star Princess eagerly, “and surely some one among them can free you from the mermaid’s power.”

“I am under a power that you alone can free me from,” declared the sculpin. “I am the sovereign of a kingdom larger and richer than your father’s. I am but a little older than yourself. They tell me I

The Star Princess

am handsome. You can free me if you will stroke my head three times and say — ”

“And say what?” cried the Star Princess.

“And say, ‘I promise to marry you as soon as we have come to my father’s palace,’ ” the sculpin answered.

“Oh, no, no,” cried the Star Princess. “I will do anything but that. I will give you everything I have, and when the kingdom is mine, you shall have that, too, and I will go out into the world and beg my bread, but I cannot marry any one except my own Prince.”

“And are you so sure that he will care to take a portionless bride?” asked the sculpin.

The maiden looked down upon the sand, then out upon the water, then she answered softly: —

“Even if he refused me, I could never

The Star Princess

marry any one else ; but," she added, "I am sure that he will want me."

"So am I," said a manly voice behind her, and, behold, there stood the Prince himself, for the third gift of the troll was that no magic should have power to change his form against his will. He had kept the form of a sculpin for a while because he knew he could be of more service to the Princess in that shape. They sat down on the yellow sand, and he told her the long, long story of his love and his sorrow, of his remaining in her father's kingdom that he might at least be near the place where he had first seen her, of his pacing up and down the shore and thinking of her, and at last of his springing from the cliff because he was sure that he heard her voice crying, "My Prince, save me, save me!"

"But look about you, my Star Princess," he said. "Do you not know this

The Star Princess

shore and this cliff towering over our heads? These waves beat upon the coast of your father's kingdom. Come, let us go to the palace."

He took hold of her hand and led her across the sandy shore, up the little hill, over a grassy meadow where flowers sprang up wherever they stepped. Then they went through the woods, where the pathway was soft with pine needles and the air was rich with fragrance, and so on to the palace of the King.

At one of the upper windows stood the Queen, gazing sadly over the water. The King was by her side. His arm was thrown around her, and he seemed to be trying to comfort her. The Prince and the Star Princess waved their hands to them; but they were looking far out to the horizon, and the wanderers were up the hill and into the palace and close beside them

The Star Princess

before they had any idea that their loneliness was at an end.

Such a welcoming as there was! The Queen wept for the suffering that they had all been through, and she laughed for joy that they were together again. Everybody in the kingdom had a whole year of holidays. The prisoners were set free. There were feasts upon feasts for all who chose to partake of them. The grass was greener, the flowers were brighter. There were such blue skies and such soft little clouds as had never been seen over the land before. The birds no longer stayed in the forest, but came freely into the city. They perched upon windows and fences and balconies and sang more sweetly than ever birds sang before.

After a year and a day of this rejoicing came the wedding of the Prince and the Star Princess. Just as the wedding pro-

The Star Princess

cession was setting off for the church, some one noticed a great sea-turtle toiling up the hill to the palace.

“I want to see the King,” he called, waving a flipper to call his attention.

The procession waited till the turtle had come up the hill. Then the King went forward cordially, and said: —

“You are welcome, Friend Turtle. Have you come to the wedding?”

“Yes,” the turtle gasped, for he was not used to climbing such high hills, and he had not yet fully caught his breath; “but I have something to say to you. I have just come from the Waterworld, and I have brought you some news.”

“And what is that?” cried the King anxiously, for even now he was afraid of the power of the cruel mermaid.

“The war is ended,” said the turtle. “The merking, the mermaid, and all their

The Star Princess

monsters are killed and devoured. Neither you nor your Queen nor the Prince nor the Star Princess has an enemy on the land or in the sea.”

Then the bells throughout the whole kingdom rang for joy, the drums beat, the trumpets blew, and the banners waved, all of their own accord.

“Bring another chariot,” ordered the King. Another chariot was brought, and the turtle was helped into it. It took its place just behind the bridal party, and they all rode away to the wedding.

THE END

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